THE

One neceſſary thing to be ſought Briefly touched,

In a four-fold

DIALOGUE,

Upon ſome of the great and moſt concerning Truths of practical Religion.

PSAL. XIX. Verſ. 11.

Moreover by them is thy Servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Printed in the Year 1679.

READER.

Since Religion is a ſerious Buſineſs, which we muſt live; and know by its power and efficacy on the ſoul, or be wholly ſtrangers thereto; and that there is a Spiritual taſte and ſavour of Divine truth, and a living Holineſs, no leſs demonſtrable than that there are living men on the earth; yea that here is the ſure way to come to a ſolide aſſurance, and Eſtabliſhment in the truth; when ſuch ſhaking times now are. If any man will do his will, he ſhall know the Doctrine, whether it be of God. Joh. 7:v. 17. *So now is the ſeaſon for its trial, amidſt theſe manifold temptations, which are here, That the lives of Chriſtians might thus be a more Viſible tranſcript of the Truth and Doctrine of Chriſt, they profeſs; but whilſt never more advantage was of means, and ſuch voluminous enlargements to extend the Theory of practical Divinity, how ſad an enſtrangement may*

be ſeen by many, if not moſt who live under the light of the Goſpel, to the moſt concerning & weighty truths thereof. If this poor eſſay might be of uſe to any ſuch, by a bleſſing from him, who can ſerve himſelf of meaneſt things, this one deſire I would leave with the Reader, to give the truth a ſerious entertaintment, and let him give the Author what he pleaſe. It's by way of Dialogue, without mentioning of Dialoguiſts, as is uſual under borrovved names, to avoid any unneceſſar multiplying of vvords, that might be occaſioned this vvay.

THE ERRATA,

Which have eſcaped the Printer through inadvertancy, may be amended thus by the Judicious Reader.

PAge 4. line 32 read Tit. 3: 2. Jam. 2: 12. p. 8. l. 6. r. leſſons. p. 10. l. 32. r. Pſ. 42 10. p. 15. l. 19. r. Jam. 4: 1. p. 20: l. 1. r. Eph. 6: 11. l. 27. r. Monarchs. p. 23. l. 31. r. left. p. 24. l. 9. r. duties. l. 18. r. Col. 3: 1. p. 25. l. 26. r. Matth. 7: 22. p. 35. l. 31. r. implicitly. p. 37. l. 25. r. to be carried. p. 47. l. 1. r. 16: 11. p. 51. l. 31. r. mighty. p. 59. l. 6. r. bribe.

I. DIALOGVE.

QVEST. I.

SInce we have this acceſs to converſe a little together, I should gladly know how to gain ſuch an hour, for ſome ſolide fruit and advantage in the improvement thereof.

ANSWER.

It is a rare and unuſual queſtion, in theſe times, which ye now make, though nothing more highly rational and neceſſar, and ſuch as gives occaſion to ſome ſad reflections, that may be too obvious on ſuch a ſubject. 1. Of the ſmall account moſt ſeeme to have of time, and of the preſent hours going by, who yet cannot Poſſibly be ſure of the next, nor bring again one minute paſt, time being ſuch a tide, that floweth but once, and muſt be either taken, or loſt for ever. 2. How very ſad the ordinary diſcourſe in ſociety and viſites moſt make to other, is ſuch, that if one ſhould keep ſilent, and overtake with a pen, what too frequently paſſeth in theſe Communications, and but read it over again, they could not but both wonder and be aſhamed at ſo ſtrange and deformed an image of themſelves. 3. That when ſuch mutual converſe and ſociety together puts oft a price in mens hand, for ſome gainful improvment hereof, and to make an intereſt for the Lord, with that Chriſtian prudence and ſobriety, in giving others an occaſion, more than to appear themſelves; yet how rare is it almoſt to

know Chriſtians to be truely ſuch by their walk, except in the duties of Worſhip, as if their intereſt were not more to *live* Religion, than to Profeſs it; and that ſo ſolemne and great a buſineſs is now before all to die; and know what an eternity means, with ſo marvellous a change we muſt admit in another world, whither this preſent hour we haſten, yea how few can be ſeen in their travelling garbe with their loynes trimmed, and their lamps burning; but rather as ſuch who minded a ſetling here.

QUEST. II. *Though this be to the furtheſt convincing and clear; yet is it not to affright men with the auſterity of Religion, as if it did warrand no cheerful and comforting converſe together, and to divert thus in any ſuteable recreations, that may be moſt ſatisfying and delightfull?*

ANSW. I ſhould be very tender to ſplit on any ſuch rock, nor do in the leaſt debate the warrantable uſe of recreations, and neceſſar unbending of mens Spirits this way, with ſobriety; but I hope ye will Confeſs, 1. That a *ſerious* frame, and the ſavour of ſpiritual things kept on the ſoul, leads more in to a true delight, and deſirable enjoying of any outward enjoyments, than the furtheſt liberty, that many take otherwiſe. 2. That a due reſtraint thus is not eaſy, or to keep within theſe bounds of Chriſtian Liberty, which is found in the cloſe to bring a ſting therewith more imbittering, than the former pleaſure ſeemed ſweet. 3. That there needs alſo a guard againſt ſuch unwarrantable and prophane games of Lottery, as the *Cardes* and *Dice*; where the hook may be as evident as the bait, and with that advantage given to the Devil this way, as it is not eaſy for ſuch to play alone, without having him a partner, both in the game and gain; and no wonder, when he finds ſuch upon his own ground, and at a work, where is ſo viſible a

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contempt and ſporting at the Providence of God, and taking his name in vain; ſuch a daring to adventure on an immediate deciſion by lot, which ſhould alone in things of greateſt weight be made uſe of by prayer.

Qu. III. *You know, that beſides any ſuch diverſions for pleaſure, how moſt have their ordinary buſineß and affaires to take them up in converſe and fellowship together, and diſcourſe thereon, as their ſeveral imployments lyes, and here is a concerning duty.*

Answ. I am far from queſtioning, what thus may be either needful, or expedient; yea I know one may follow with advantage the work of a Chriſtian in that way of his outward calling, more than in the furtheſt abſtractedneſs from the world, and all humane ſociety; And that the more a Chriſtian, the more alſo is he a man, and at the greater advantage thus for being active and dexterous in his outward concernes, but you know *the time is ſhort*, and theſe frequent intercommunings moſt have about things of the world are oft more from a too eager ſcent after the ſame, than upon grounds either of neceſſity, or conveniency, as though there their maine work lay; and what is for eternity, were but ſomething on the by, to be followed.

Qu. IV. *Since we are thus fallen on ſuch a ſubject, I ſhould deſire to know, if there be cauſ to offend, or queſtion that freedome, which is ſo uſual nens ordinary converſe together, ſi ſpeaking their thoughts at large, and to paß their judgment on others at a diſtance, as they ſee cauſe, or have either prejudice, or reſpects to them: For to me it ſeemes the moſt common ſubject of diſcourſe, almoſt in all ſocieties?*

Answ. The Occaſion you have for ſuch a propoſal

is too manifeſt, and a diſeaſe ſo ſpreading, as ſeemes to deſpiſe all remedies, but may be the more ſtrange, that it is ſure, this is not with moſt, from want of light anent duty, or how deep a wound they may thus give themſelves more than others: But oh is this freedome you ſpeak of 1. *To abound in love towards all men* 1. *Theſ.* 3: 12. and by a tender condeſcending deport *to be all things to all, for the Goſpel's ſake*? 2. Is this to enforce reſpect and an awful regard to the truth, from ſuch as never knew the inward power thereof on their ſoul, ſo as they might ſee that a ſerious Chriſtian is the truely beſt friend and neighbour; yea thus to be as a common good and bleſſing to mankind; one of whom brings more credit in to the Doctrine of Chriſt than an hundred Profeſſours? 3. Is this to anſwer ſo preſſing a call, *Col.* 3. 12, *put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, long ſuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel againſt any, even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do you*? And is not ſuch tenderneſs in our walk towards others, an indiſpenſible part of our Sanctification, whilſt this freedome you ſpeak of, is too oft a giving vent to ſome hid bitterneſs and enmity within againſt ſuch, who may be the Object of the Love of God in Chriſt, as all the ſanctified are? But this ſeems to be a peculiar Poiſon and Plague of the preſent age. 4. Can you find it eaſy, yea poſſible to have ſuch uſual freedome you ſpeak of, conſiſtent with theſe expreſs Commands of the great Lawgiver; *to love our enemies Math.* 5: 44. *not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good Rom.* 12: 21. *to ſpeak evil of none* in a deſigned blotting of their name, *Tit.* 3: 7. *Jam.* 2: 11. or *ſmite them with the tongue Jer.* 20: 10? Sure if theſe be the revealed Counſel of God, and a part of that holy and ſpotleſs Rule of our Duty, ſhould not the ſame diſtance be kept here, as with other ſcandalous ſins? 5. Whatever may be of a neceſſar call ſometimes to witneſs againſt others at a diſtance,

ſtance, when the truth is concerned, and the advantage of ſome then preſent, and for their being guarded againſt any contagious evil or ſnare, as alſo upon a ſerious reſentment of any injury done to the Lord; yea for a juſt and neceſſar clearing themſelves, from the reproach of ſuch, who through them might thus ſeek to thruſt at the credit of the Goſpel; yet is there not even here a ſpecial regard to be had to that end, that *it may be for edification Rom.* 15: 2? And that no bitterneſs or animoſity on ſome other account be the great incitement thereto, for then ſuch do ſerve their own luſt and paſſion. It was a choice word of one, I *am* (ſais he) *reſtrained to ſpeak my judgment of ſuch, by whom* I *have been injured, leſt my light be bribed to ſerve that moſt dreadful luſt of revenge*; O *revenge* which is ſo viſible a transforming into the very image of the Devil, by which he hath gained his greateſt triumphs over many. 6. Is this an anſwering to that excellent rule given by our Maſter, to *do to others what we would have them doing to us, Matth.* 7: 12? Than which (beſides the Authority of the Command) nothing is more beautiful, and becoming an immortal ſoul, nothing more anſwering to reaſon than thus to argue, how ſhould I expect or wiſh that meaſure from others, if my heart doth not ſerve to give the ſame to them? 7. And doth not ſuch a freedome you ſpeak of, bear a blacker dy, the more perſonal reſpects may be thus pretended, when ſome hid prejudice lyes at the root, ſince thus it is a more dreadful diſſimulation before God, and the wound made deeper, by being under a ſhew and cover of love, like *Joabs* deſigned embracement of *Amaſa*, for that very end that he might ſmite him at the fifth rib?

Qu. V. *VVhat, is there no warrantable judging then of others, and condemning ſuch from whom we injuriouſly ſuffer, when this is not againſt the truth?*

Answ. My Friend, you know there is but *one Judge*

and Lawgiver, whoſe it is to kill and make a live. Jam. 4: ver. 12. Though each hath allowed to him a judgment of diſcretion; but there is, I confeſs, a choice and ſure way for one to judge another, Oh that it were more known amongſt men, to judge them by their walk and practice; ſo as by tenderneſs and ſobriety to condemne the imbittered paſſion of others by ſilence and compaſſion, thus to rebuke a haſty and brawling temper; yea to take revenge, (O a bleſſed revenge) on ſuch as hate them by ſeeking in truth their good. And is it not thus the Holy Ghoſt hath ſhewed how with the greateſt advantage a Chriſtian can oppoſe himſelf to his adverſaries, & bear witneſs againſt them. *2 Cor. 6: ver. 6. By pureneſs, by knowledge, by long-ſuffering, by kindneſs, by the Holy Ghoſt, by love unfained, by the Word of Truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteouſneſs on the right hand and on the left.*

Qu. VI. *Such is the authority and beauty of Truth, even when it is moſt grieving and contrair to the fleſh, as puts me to a new enquiry on this ſubject; what ſhould moſt help to that ſweet, and deſireable converſe with others in a ſad and diſtempered time, ſo as love and concord may loſe no ground, and thus to anſwere what Chriſtian Prudence calls for in ſuch a caſe?*

Answ. This, I confeſs, were a choice and deſireable project worthy and becoming a Chriſtian to follow in the greateſt earneſt, when ſo many low deſignes are this day on foot; not only to adorne the Goſpel, but for their own inward peace and tranquillity; for which I may adventure to offer theſe few things, which I am ſure cannot be practically underſtood, what ever the times or place be wherein our lot is caſt, and not help to a ſweet facility in ſuch a duty. 1. To guard againſt *Credulity*, or a being haſty to conceive an injury and lay-

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ing too great a weight on ſudden conjectures and ſuſpition, which tends both to darken and diſquiet the mind; none ever yet gained by indulgence hereto, but how oft have their after thoughts enforced an upbraiding of themſelves with weakneſs and folly? 2. How ſweet and eaſy might this become to us in learning that leſſon more from our bleſſed Maſter of *Meekneſs*, *Matth.* 11: *ver.* 29. Which is one of the rare graces of the Spirit, and no ſoftneſs of nature, ſo bleſſed a cure and relief to the moſt tart and froward temper hath ſuch advantage with it to convince the World, and conciliat mens reſpects to the truth of holineſs, who look but at a diſtance by ſo lovely and gaining an appearance? And why is ſuch a cover put on an imbittered and paſſionat diſpoſition, that it is their natural complexion? it may be true, but it is ſure, it is black nature unſubdued to the grace of God; whilſt many naturally paſſionat and cholerick have through grace got that conqueſt over themſelves, as few with whom they have converſed could diſcerne any ſuch thing, even upon moſt remarkeable provocations. 3. To know, and be under ſome weight of this, as a ſpecial opportunity for the Lord, the loſs whereof ſhould be a loſs indeed, when there is ſuch a call, to *requite evil with good*, both in doing and ſpeaking, *and your reward ſhall be great Luk.* 6: *v.* 35. And are not a Chriſtians *opportunities* a part of his *riches* and treaſure? I know this will ſeeme a ſtrange contradiction to many, but a ſubdued Chriſtian by the grace of God, is a ſtrange and marvellous thing. 4. Let us know more what it is to be *humble*, and then forbearance and tender condeſcendence in our walk with others will natively follow. O bleſſed *humility*, that ſhineth moſt in its diſappearing, and layes the Chriſtian more truely near his hope, yea nearer to heaven, when it layes his face on the duſt, than when his head hath ſeemed to be among the ſtarrs. O what ſweet and deſireable ſociety ſhould this make amongſt Chriſtians, which teacheth effectually to paſs by injuries, and not ſeek

their own glory, or to dare a deſpiſing of others; which by keeping the Spirit low fitts them for nearer converſe with God, and a being led in the way of his Counſels, and whilſt pride ſwells, and cauſeth a fever in the ſoul, this brings ſo ſweet and ſenſible a coole thereto; Yea is one of the two great loſſons, that Chriſt hath put by themſelves *Matth.* 11: *v.* 29. and thus enſured a reſt and tranquillity of ſoul, whatever be the changes of their outward Lot. 5. Let us alſo for this end get ſight much kept of that great example ſet before us for our conformity thereto, 1. *Pet.* 2: 23. *who being reviled, reviled not again, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly*, and it is ſure we then fruſtrat our relief in the laſt part of theſe words, if the firſt be not ſeriouſly taken alongs therewith. 6. We have this excellent mean alſo expreſly commanded us, *to ſeek peace with all men and follow after it* *Pſ* 34: *v.* 14 *Heb.* 12: 14. Yea even with ſuch, from whom we may have ſuſtained greateſt injury; nor can it anſwer this to give it entertainment, when it comes; but to goe forth and meet the ſame, yea to ſeek it when it is a miſſing, and though it flee, to follow it. O! what a lovely appearance doth this put upon Chriſtians, and gives them a greater Victory, than to overcome a City, when thus grace in its vigorous exerciſe in one, meets with the prevailing corruption of another: and by yeelding overcomes; by a humble condeſcendence ſubjects the proud, ſo as to enforce their falling before that more excellent Spirit, with a diſcerneable aw & authority over them, for *greater is he, who is in them, than* he *who is in the world*, 1 *Joh.* 4? *v* 4. 7. Let us be tender in taking offence no leſs, than in giving, in a haſty judging of perſons, or actions at a diſtance, when we cannot ſo certainly know, what circumſtances may concurre in ſuch a caſe, and ſure each may know, how many things have begot jealouſy & bitterneſs of Spirit, which upon more clear and convincing trial have not had the leaſt ground, whilſt thus the great Adverſary of the Church geteth advantage. 8. To be

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ſlow to ſpeak, which hath its peculiar beauty and advantage at all times is of ſingular uſe here, when under any ſtirre or perturbation of Spirit, thus to get a reſtraint over themſelves, till the water be more clear, and the mudd fallen to the ground. O what a choice mean were this to prevent the frequent diſcompoſure many fall in, to be under ſome ſerious and ſevere reſolution, not to ſpeak for ſome time, when they are provoked, and how ſweet and quieting ſhould this be upon after thoughts? 9. A being much at home by ſelf-reflection, and having our eyes turned inward, ſhould much help to blunt the keenneſs of that edge, which is too oft againſt others, and put Chriſtians on another ſcent, how *to reſtore ſuch with the Spirit of meekneſs, who may be over taken with a fault, conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted, Gal. 6: verſ. 1.* Here muſt be no cover, for any coolneſs, or indifferency in the matters of truth, but it is ſure, there is a ſweet concord there, in the Zeal of God with the Spirit of meekneſs, and no jarre, but what our corruption makes. O bleſſed they who can goe the furtheſt length of ceding in their own things, and bear perſonal Reflections, but may not, nor dare quite any thing upon their Maſters intereſt. I am much perſwaded one great let of ſuch a diſcerneable with holding of the influences of God, and which obſtructeth prayer at this day, is much there, that the Spirit of Love and Tenderneſs is not more entertained amongſt Chriſtians.

Qu. VII. *If theſe truths you ſpeak of were more practically known, what another luſtre and appearance ſhould Chriſtian Society and Converſe then have; and the times we are now fallen in ſeeme to need examples more than precepts this way; but oh! for what uſe can ſome be to promote any intereſt for God, who are in ſo mean and low a capacity?*

Ans. Why do ye thus ſpeak? For it is ſure, none

can want ſome triall in this preſent caſe, to give a convincing example to others of the Truth and Power of Godlineſs; nor is there any Lot and Condition ſo low and obſcure, where theſe advantages does not wait them for ſome honourable ſervice to the Lord in their day. 1. To adorne the Doctrine of the Goſpel, by a Chriſtianly Prudent and tender walk, in ſhewing forth *the power and vertues of him, that hath called them*, and thus by commending holineſs, to gain reſpect to the truth, even from the conſcience of ſuch as hate it How remarkeably hath this made a very mean and obſcure Perſon otherwiſe, ſhine with greateſt brightneſs in the place and corner he lived in? 2. And doth not times of deepeſt diſtreſs, in a low and afflicted ſtate afford moſt ſpecial Opportunities for ſome eminent fruit and ſervice to Jeſus Chriſt? by *abaſement* rather than *abounding*? Yea what? is not the Affliction and Poverty of the meaneſt a talent to improve for the Lord, and paying rent to him by *Patience* and Chriſtian enduring with Cheerfulneſs, that it is for his ſake, no leſs than the greateſt enlargement of others? 3. As no ſervice to ſuch a Maſter ſhall ever be loſt, or want of *having more given in to ſuch, who are faithful in their little*, hath not thus alſo the meaneſt Chriſtian ſome call from the Company he may be caſt in, when Atheiſme is at ſuch a height, and a generation of mockers almoſt every where abounding, to confeſs Jeſus Chriſt, and his Truth before men, by ſome grave and convincing witneſs thereto, as well, as when he is called before Rulers? ſince to ſuch an occaſional call, that Scripture hath a reſpect likewiſe, aſwell as to a more ſolemne and publick appearance, *Matth.* 10: 32. *he that confeſſeth me before men, him will I confeſs before my Father and his Angels*; Oh! What it is to know *Pſal.* 42: 4. *it was as a ſword in my bones, when they ſaid unto me continually, where is thy God?* 4. Can a Chriſtians lot be too low; for following ſo great a ſervice to the Publick intereſt of the Church, by prayer and wreſtling in ſecret, when there is no witneſs

neſs from without, but he who ſeeth in ſecret, will not let this want an open reward, and if not here, yet at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt?

Qu. VIII. *But ſhould not thus ſuch whoſe credit with men cannot bear them out with much weight become but a matter of ſport & deriſion to theſe they converſe with, in a time when ſerious Religion is looked on as the greateſt of foolishneſs; yea ſhould it not reſtraine ones* Caſting of Pearles before Swine, leſt they turne again, and tear them Mat. 7: 6.

Ans. You know that Chriſtian Wiſdome is profitable to direct in ſuch a duty as occaſion offers; and that rule of *expediency* ſhould be much weighed, what advantage preſent circumſtances may offer or deny, for edification; but I muſt ſay, carnal prudence takes off too much advantage here; and in no time hath that Truth wanted a convincing ſeale of the Lords *chooſing the foolish things of the world to confound the wiſe, and things that are deſpiſed, yea things that are not hath he choſen, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh ſhould glory in his preſence* 1 Cor. 1: 27, 28. And it is ſure, you cannot but know. 1. That there is ſome aw and authority, which attend rhe truth of holineſs, even in a very mean Perſon on the conſcience of men, who may be otherwiſe haters thereof: Yea to enforce ſome greater evidence of their reſpects. 2. And does not ſerious *Piety* and *Practicall Prudence* mutually ſtrengthen other, ſo as the more a Chriſtian, the more he is thus at an advantage to know his duty, and be ſagaciouſly diſcerning therein. 3. But how amazing is ſuch a reproach caſt at this day upon *Piety*, of weakneſs and and foolishneſs (not but that Chriſtians in truth, may be found in many things imprudent, which is, becauſe they are not more Chriſtians) whilſt the native reſult of ſerious godlineſs is ſo evident, to have a watching eye over ones Spirit, to the Moderation of Paſſions, and a

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ſweet calme and compoſure of mind, amidſt the many ſnares and temptations here: their heart thus lying near to their working hand, as *Solomon ſhewes Eccleſ.* 10: 2. *a wiſe mans heart is at his right hand, but a fools is at his left.*

DIALOGUE II.

THe late communing we had at our former meeting together, (which I hope may not want ſome fruit) puts me to follow this advantage of our preſent converſe upon a further account, for clearing ſome of the moſt weighty concernes of Chriſtianity; and notto loſe time, the firſt propoſal I make is this?

QUEST. I.

How it is demonſtrably clear, that there are two contrary States, to which the whole race of mankind belongs; a ſtate of nature, and that which we muſt be entered into by grace; yea, that the new birth and that marvellous change by converſion *makes a Chriſtian to differ from the reſt of men, not in degree, but in the kind and nature, no leſs than the ſtate of man here is above the beaſts.*

ANSWER.

It is not ſtrange, though ſo great a truth ſhould be marvellous to our thoughts, upon any ſerious converſe therewith, but ſuch cleareſt evidence hath the certainty of this from the Scripture, and lyes ſo cloſs with the whole thereof, as I am ſure, they muſt quite the Bible, and this together; whilſt theſe are ſo undeniable, even to our ſenſe. 1. That one Chriſtian cannot beget another

another; and how far this new life by grace is above nature, or the poſſibility of ſecond cauſes, which no arguments, or perſuaſives of eloquence by moral influence conld ever effectuat, but is the immediat work of the Spirit, and forming of a new *Creation* by the Word of the Goſpel, in the naked ſimplicity thereof. 2. How clear is the truth of this marvellous ſtate of grace by ſo viſible a reality of the effects and operations thereof; as to change an impoiſoned nature, and take off that imbred averſion to ſpiritual things; the ingrafting of the Word by a ſecond impreſſion of the Law written upon the heart and inward parts, whereby it is transformed into the ſame image; yea ſuch convincing effects, as a living Chriſtian may be as diſcerneable, as one being a living man, by ſignes and marks peculiar to his kind. 3. Is it not known with the furtheſt evidence, the truth of a vital ſcent and air with ſerious godlineſs, which no fair ſhew in the fleſh, or any profeſſion can poſſibly counterfeit; no more than the greateſt Artiſts could paint the ſweet ſwell of the violet and roſe, or make a dead picture to breath and move. 4. You may ſee the reality of this ſtate, whoſe native tendency is to move upward to its original, as naturally as the ſparkes goe upward, in love, deſire, and a feeling intercourſe then with him; yea with ſuch a ſupernatural inſtinct, which is no leſs marvellous and evident, than that of the young child moving toward the breaſts. 5. It is ſuch a ſtate, where you may ſee the moſt diſcerning of men in a natural condition know not, nor can underſtand what belongs thereto, or what theſe felt-enjoyments of God and his workings on the ſoul are, or their being brought near to his reconciled face in Chriſt, and laid under theſe warming beams; no more than the beaſts of the field know what belongs to the ſtate of man, which is ſo high in its kind above them. 6. Such a ſtate alſo, as needs the continued breathings and influences of the Spirit of life, to keep it in any vigorous exerciſe, no leſs than the parched

ched ground hath need of the rain, without which it is dried and languiſheth; yea ſuch as you know hath its food, delights and griefs peculiar to its own nature, with which ſtrangers cannot intermedle.

Qu. II. *But ſince it is too evident that the moſt of men, and ſo many of notable gifts and endowments know nothing what belongs to that ſtate you ſpeak of, or what is further than the condition they are in by* nature: *Oh! is that natural ſtate, ſo very dreadful and affrighting as you ſeeme to underſtand or that none poſſibly can be ſaved herein, whilſt not ſo groſs and corrupt as others?*

Answ. You know what account the Scripture hath given of this, and how exact a pourtraiture is there of ſuch a ſtate in its true ſhape and colours; and if men will but credit their own eyes, let them but firſt look in on themſelves, and then abroad upon the World, and I am ſure, ſuch muſt ſee, that the face does not more anſwer to its own reſemblance in the glaſs, than this deplorable ſtate of nature, without renovation by grace does anſwer that marvellous and clear diſcovery of the Holy Ghoſt in the written Word, thereof; and oh! is it not an amazing, and horride ſight, when ſuch is the ſtate of nature, *as* 1. *Neither can nor will receive the things of the Spirit of God*, 1 *Cor.* 2: *ver.* 14. But what ever uſe theſe ſeeme to have of reaſon, in the things of a man both natural and civil, yea in the theory of religious things; yet neither knowes, nor can ſavour what ſpiritual truths are in themſelves, and their own nature. 2. Where you ſee ſo ſtrange *an enmity and imbred alienation* from the life of God, with a continued byaſs and tendency againſt Holineſs, *Gal.* 4: *ver.* 29. Where no private quarrel, or perſonal intereſt giveth riſe thereto: Yea thus how no enmity is more deep and fixed againſt the Goſpel, than that which followes a poliſhed and refined nature. 3. It

is not only the Saints, who have each an unregenerat part within, but a natural conſcience is enforced to witneſs how ſin is attended with ſhame, and a making themſelves vile thereby, yea ſuch, as none can put on their cloaths in the morning, but may have an account of the fallen ſtate of man. 4. From whence are theſe *warres & fightings* without, and theſe impetuous boilings of envy, wrath and revenge within? Are they not from the *luſts of the fleſh*, *Jam.* 4: *ver.* 16. Yea ſuch eager graſpings after that baite of carnal pleaſure, even whilſt they know the imbittering ſting which inſeparably followes thereon? 5. And what do theſe ſtrange conflicts, and contrary tides, with which men are ſo oft hurried and rent in pieces, as with wilde horſes, betwixt their judgment and will, which once were in a ſweet league, ſuch as even heathens were conforced to ſee and confeſs, that if the mind of flagitious men were laid open, it ſhould be ſeen how they are cruciated and puniſhed by their own ſins, and as the body is rent and torne by torture, ſo is the mind, by cruelty, envy, luſts, and paſſion, with theſe inordinate deſires and perturbations within? Oh! what do thoſe meane, if you will but come near to conſider this ſo ſad and amazing a ſight: Are they not a viſible tranſcript of black nature, whereinto man is fallen? 6. And what a horride thing muſt that be, that ſhould be capable of ſuch contempt of the Holineſs of God, and ſo inſenſible of its own vileneſs and pollution, yea ſuch as renders men under the greateſt advantage of all accompliſhments of gifts whether moral or natural; yea the greateſt of men, who are ſtrangers to a renewed ſtate, to be the vileſt & baſeſt part of the creation? And O what a dreadful ſight will ſuch once be to the Saints and Angels, when the ſinfulneſs of ſin, and the ſhame of their nakedneſs ſhall be then ſhewed forth?

Qu. III. *Though I am inforced to aſſent to ſuch clear & undeniable evidences of that deplorable ſtate men are*

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in by nature, whilſt though it cannot be hid yet how little is it conſidered, or laid to heart? But oh! is there ſo indiſpenſible a neceſſity of Holineſs and to know the inward power thereof on the ſoul and of a new life begot in us by regeneration, as none can be poſſibly ſaved, and ſecured from everlaſting wrath without this whilſt there is ſuch abounding light in theſe times, yea a viſible adherence, and aſſent to the Doctrine of Chriſt by many who may be ſtrangers to this?

ANSW. I ſhall but offer ſome grounds to clear the abſolute and peremptor neceſſity of this you ſeeme to queſtion, and then leave you to judge thereanent, when you have once brought them near your thoughts. 1. Though our right and claime to an eternal glory muſt alone be by the righteouſneſe of Chriſt, and is not founded on *Holineſs*, yet it is as true, we have none without it, for *without this* hath the God of truth by his Word and faithfulneſs enſured, that *none ſhall ſee his face*, *Hebr.* 12: *ver.* 14. nor *without the new birth, that it is poſſible to enter into the Kingdome of Heaven*, *Joh.* 3: *ver.* 3. 2. It is ſure, without this, mens hope of the glory which is to come can leane upon no other ground, but that the Holy God muſt ceaſe to be faithful and true, and reſcind his everlaſting decrees and purpoſe, for complying with their ſins, *Eph.* 1: *ver.* 4. *Who hath choſen us in Chriſt before the foundation of the World, that we ſhould be holy and unblameable before him in love.* 3. If there can be no reconciling of Heaven and Hell, then without this can none enter into that bleſſed ſtate where is the perfect enjoyment of God; ſince there is an amazing inconſiſtence with the nature of the things themſelves, how ſuch could poſſibly dwell there, who were never *made meet to be partakers of that inheritance of the Saints in light by a new nature*, *Coloſſ.* 1: *ver.* 12. 4. And what a ſtrange contradiction to reaſon is this, for to think they are approaching

ng to glory, if it be not in the way to grace, or that ſuch can love that in another World, which they now ſo viſibly hate, or can thus own any true deſire or hope of that bleſſed ſtate, who have ſuch a natural and imbred averſion to the begun enjoying of it here, in the life and work of Sanctification. 5. It is ſure that our eternal life in glory muſt be begun in that *new life*, which is by grace formed here in the ſoul; nor can ſuch ever poſſibly expect to enter that Kingdome which is above, where the Kingdome of God in ſome meaſure is not *known within here, which conſiſts in righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, Rom. 14: *ver.* 17. Though it is ſure alſo, that grace, and grace alone muſt ſum and cloſe all our accounts, yea that the whole of practical Godlineſs muſt reſolve there, *I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me, and the life I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me*, Galat. 2: *ver.* 20.

Qu. IV. *I confeſs it is not eaſy, except men turne reſolutely Atheiſts, to debate this Truth, but oh! what ſhould it meane, that ſo few can be ſeen in earneſt in ſuch a throng of profeſſed Chriſtians, with that excellent ſtudy of Holineſs, who yet come the furtheſt length in an aſſent thereto, and what might moſt help for this end?*

Answ. It is irreſiſtible grace which alone can make this effectual. But I ſhall offer ſome few enforcing motives for ſo great and neceſſar a ſtudy, with this one deſire, that you might but in earneſt think thereon, when alone. 1. That it is more excellent and deſirable to exerciſe grace, than to enjoy comfort, when the more ſharp and ſearching conflicts this meets with for trial, the more fruit and gain is going to the fore here and for ever; Yea are not the moſt remarkeable aſſaults and trials of a Chriſtians life ſome of his greateſt opportunities for

ſowing to the Spirit, *Gal.* 6: *ver* 8. *and being faithful to their meaſure and talent*, *Matth.* 25: *ver.* 15. Yea ſuch, wherein our bleſſed Head, in the truth of his grace in them, and marvellous power thereof, hath ſo conſpicuous a triumph in each of his people, which ſhould be accounted a gain to ſuch, beyond the ſaddeſt loſs they can ſuſtaine otherwiſe. 2. That not the leaſt act, or exerciſe of *Holineſs*, and whatſoever hath been done for the Lord can be loſt, but ſhall be had in remembrance, and abide for ever, in its eternal reward; yea nothing of the Chriſtians work in doing, or enduring, their ſecret wreſtlings againſt ſin, the reſiſting of temptations, mortification, and patience for the name of Chriſt, when moſt hid from the eyes of men, ſhall be forgot by him who ſees in ſecret, to meet them once and for ever, with their Maſters acceptance, *well done*, &c. *Matth.* 25: *ver.* 21. in the fulneſs of joy, and their being rewarded before the Angels and all the Redeemed. O who would not run, though all the way ſhould be through thickets of briars and thorns, who have ſuch a joy and hope ſet before them? And that here is no doubtful or conjectural thing, go to the Scripture and ſee what is ſo expreſly ſhewed, 2 *Cor.* 4: *ver.* 17. *For our light affliction which is but for a moment* (whereby the Chriſtians Sanctification is both tried and exerciſed) *worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 1 *Pet.* 1: 7. *That the trial of your faith being much more precious, than the Gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praiſe, and glory, and honour, at the appearance of Jeſus Chriſt*: and *Rev* 14: *ver.* 13. *And I heard a voice from Heaven, ſaying unto me, Bleſſed are the dead, who die in the Lord, from hence forth*: *Yea ſaith the Spirit, for they reſt from their labour, and their works do follow them*; They go not before, ſince it's the blood of Chriſt which only can do this, and make ſure the Chriſtians entry into that bleſſed Land: But they ſhall aſſuredly follow, and abide

abide for ever before the Lord. 3. And is not *Sanctification* the higheſt excellency that humane nature is capable of, & no leſs marvellous than our redemption by Chriſt from eternal wrath, in having the ſoul thus ſubdued by grace, & to be made partakers of the *Divine Nature*? O how great and aſtoniſhing a thing is it, that the ſeed & principles of Holineſs in the Chriſtian ſoul ſhould be preſerved amidſt ſuch continual aſſaults of corruption within, & theſe temptations that are without, as a ſpark of fire in the midſt of waters, which impetuouſly run to quench the ſame; yea that ſuch a party, as the Devil, the world and the flesh, by which the moſt of mankind is ſo viſibly enſlaved, and kept in chaines, yet thus made to fall in their greateſt ſtrength, before the truth of Holineſs, in the meaneſt of the Saints, though nothing here for them *to boaſt in of themſelves, but in the power of Chriſt thus reſting upon them*, 2 *Cor.* 12: *ver.* 9? That day, O bleſſed day! is approaching, when this Scripture ſhall be fully underſtood, which I have ſometimes thought on, as a truth of greateſt weight, 2 *Theſſ.* 1: 10. *When he ſhall come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that beleeve*: Which is not only to be admired by them, but in them: for what he hath wrought and perfected in them, as well as done for them. 4. Is it not known and tried, that without *Holineſs* in its lively exerciſe, all aſſayes for inward peace or tranquillity of mind, and that compoſure of the affections, which is both ſo comforting & beautifying of a Chriſtian, will be in vaine? and oh! what does remain, if this be not underſtood, what a preſent and ſenſible reliefe is here in *Love*, *Humility*, *Meekneſs*, *Patience* and *Hope*, to the ſaddeſt diſtempers of the mind? *Pſal.* 119: *ver.* 165. *great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them*. That whilſt Satan is at the furtheſt at work to faint and cruſh the Chriſtian in his journey homeward: yet can he only reach a bruiſing of their heele, who are thus ſecured *by the whole armour of God*, from a thruſt at their vital

parts, *Eph.* 6: *ver*, 14. and therefore it is remarkeable, that there is no piece of armour there given for the back, but only to ſuch as withſtand and reſiſt, nor to thoſe who flie. 5. Is not the fruits of *Holineſs* that peculiar *Revenue*, which Jeſus Chriſt calleth from his followers here, to adorne the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and ſhew his grace towards them has not been in vain? And are not theſe ſuch *fruits* which can only be brought forth in the ſeaſon thereof, a ſeaſon that is ſhort, and for all eternity will not recurre again? 6. It is ſure, nothing is ſo lovely to raviſh the ſoul with the glory and excellency thereof as this, were it *ſpiritually* diſcerned; to ſee and admire that infinit purity, righteouſneſs, truth and love ſhining in the great patterne Chriſt himſelf, and what a marvellous luſtre the reflection hereof hath, even on his followers here on the earth, in ſome begun conformity to his glorious image, whilſt not one glance thereof in truth, (what ever be of a falſe ſhew) is to be found in the whole world beſides. Oh were it believed, how much of Heaven might be enjoyed here by a greater length in the ſtudy of Holineſs, and what inexpreſſible joy, peace and ſerenity of Spirit doth aſſuredly wait thereon; what ſweet facility and delight is thus reached in the Chriſtians work, when their motion lyes from the inward principles of a new life, yea that it is ſure, the meaneſt this day is by grace called up to a higher ſtate, than that of the greateſt Monachs of the earth, and if there were no greater intereſt and preferment to be looked after than what the world can beſtow on any, we could not eaſily know what were deſireable here in being men.

Qu. V. *Since theſe truths are to the furtheſt convincing and clear, and that it is ſure, this is the great buſineß I have to follow in the few dayes I am to be upon the earth, to be aſſured of an eternal bleſſedneß; I would in earneſt know, what are the moſt clear and undeniable marks from the Scripture, of a* being in Chriſt

Chriſt, *and the certainty of* converſion, *that I leane not my peace here on ſome falſe ground, when it is ſo amazing at what rate many now own themſelves to be Chriſtians; for if I be deceived thereanent, and go with the multitude; Oh then I am deceived indeed, which eternity cannot recover again, through want of the ſerious trial of this within time?*

Answ. It is a great buſineſs you are upon, and aſſuredly the higheſt work of a Chriſtians life now to live for God, and to know they ſhall for ever be with him in glory: Oh! how rare are thoſe in this age, who are on this trial, and to work out their Salvation in fear and trembling: Whilſt ſuch a throng is about the things of this life, as almoſt no time can be found for the one *neceſſar thing*. It is ſure, to have an evidence of our being in the ſtate of grace, is of more worth than all the trouble can be in acquiring it, and if ſuch die in a miſtake here, they are then undone for ever; But, it is ſtrange, what means ſuch halting and uncertainty in this matter, when it is ſo clear. 1. That there is a certainty attainable of ones ſtate and being in Chriſt, as can make it eaſy to adventure into eternity with that aſſurance, *for me to die is gain, Phil.* 1. 21. and that *Pſal.* 73: 24. *He will guide me by his counſel, and afterward receive me to glory:* Which I am ſure, were it more underſtood, the greateſt trial of a Chriſtian then ſhould be more how to bear his joy, than his griefs, even under the ſoreſt preſſure of affliction; yea the greateſt acts of patience and ſelf denial would be to be willing and ſubmiſſive to ſtay for ſome time here. 2. It is ſure, the Scripture leaves none to a doubtful or uncertain enquiry anent this; but hath ſo clear and diſtinct a ſound, as none needs ſay, *Who ſhall go up to Heaven*, that we may know, whether we ſhall dwell there for ever, for *the Word is near*, *Rom.* 10: *ver.* 8. *Deut.* 30. *ver.* 12. and *theſe things are written that our joy may be full*,

1 *Joh.* 1: *ver.* 4. and *that theſe who believe, may know they have eternal life*, 1 *Joh.* 5: *ver.* 13. 3. Though the work of trial anent a Chriſtians ſtate be of greateſt weight, yet lyes it not in any long circuit, or many words, but it is ſuch as from ſome few clear, plaine and infallible markes, which are founded upon cleareſt evidence from the Scripture, may be with the furtheſt certainty determined. 4. It is to the *touch ſtone*, but not to the *ballance* a Chriſtian muſt here come for trial, that it be true in the kind, even whilſt the degree and meaſure may be very ſmall to their eyes. 5. But it is needful to know that the loweſt degree of grace is above flesh and blood, ſo as none can come to Jeſus Chriſt, without a drawing power from himſelf, and ſuch a pull at the heart, as muſt bring the grip with it. But to come a little more near to your propoſal. Do you in truth queſtion, if you have ever yet paſt the new birth, and be in the ſtate of grace, and where you ſhall dwell for ever? You may then bring it to a ſpeedy cloſe upon theſe clear and undeniable grounds. 1. That the Scriptures bring down before our eyes that greateſt depth of *election*, ſo as it can be no more ſure ſuch ſhall be ſaved, who are predeſtinat to life, were it poſſible to ſee their names write in that ſecret roll of the eternal counſel of God, than it is ſure ſuch are elected, and ſhall undoubtedly be ſaved, who have come to Jeſus Chriſt in the acceptation of his offer in the Goſpel; for thus muſt we firſt make *our effectual calling ſure*, and then we aſſuredly know *our election*. 2 *Pet.* 1: 10. 2. There can be no debate here, that where converſion is, the work of the Spirit muſt be then known in convincing men of ſin. *Joh.* 16: 9. ſince the great healer can be no Phyſician to the *whole*, but to the *ſick*. *Matth.* 9: 12. ſuch, who have been in ſome meaſure Pricked to the heart with ſuch a ſight of a natural ſtate, the ſinfulneſs of ſin, the Spiritual extent of the law in ſome ſuch meaſure and degree, as is needful to make roome for Jeſus Chriſt, who had never a weight on them before; that as the needle in the compaſs is in a continued agitation, and cannot fixe unril it be at the right point and

ſettle

ſettle there, then, O then is there no poſſible quiet, until they have *found a reſt in Jeſus Chriſt* Matth. 11 29. 3. *If any be in Chriſt, he is a new Creature* 2 *Cor.* 5: 17. which is the *new man* that all muſt put on, who were ever ſavingly called, and thus know what it is to have that witneſs within of the ſanctifying work of the Spirit, which is alwayes a ſure, though not alwayes alike clear evidence of a new ſtate and *being in Chriſt Rom.* 8: 1. Yea it is ſure, the *new birth* muſt be once paſt here. *Joh.* 3: 3. elſe you are loſt for eternity, and now judge what comforting evidence you have got of this, if you were to look death at this preſent hour in the face. 4. Is any thing more plain and expreſs, than this is from the Scripture, that to ſuch as are ſaved, the truth of the Goſpel, and of a *crucified Chriſt is the power and the wiſdome of God*? 1 *Cor.* 1: 24. and have you this witneſs to bear from undoubted experience, that you have got ſuch a ſight of the drawing power and beauty of Jeſus Chriſt in the offer of the Goſpel, that paſſeth natural underſtanding as hath determined your conſent to the furtheſt to embrace ſo invaluable a bargain, though it ſhould be at the rate to *ſell all* to make ſuch a purchaſs. *Matth.* 13: 46? 5. It is expreſs and clear from the Scripture, that with a converted ſtate there alſo is known a Spiritual light and *diſcerning of the things that are freely given us of God* 1 *Cor.* 2: 12. which they never knew before; yea, that there is no midle ſtate betwixt theſe two, of *being tranſlated out of the darkneſs* of nature *into that marvellous light* of the Goſpel, which then ſhineth in upon the ſoul, when once that bleſſed day of converſion hath begun to dawn. 1 *Pet.* 2: 9. And now can you upon ſureſt triall *put to your ſeale that God is true* herein? 6. Hath the Scripture left this either doubtful or dark in the leaſt, that *to ſuch as believe, Jeſus Chriſt is precious*? 1 *Pet.* 2: *verſ.* 7. he hath got their love, hath gained their heart and conſent to *be hence forth no more their own, but Chriſts.* 1 *Cor.* 6: 19. and here to take up their reſt never to part, which muſt not want ſome trial, if the world, or if tribulation or diſtreſs will part them with his *love.* Now bring this near your thoughts what you know of ſuch a

mark. 7. Is it not clear, that with a converted ſtate *the war is begun* that will never ceaſe here, *betwixt the flesh and the Spirit Gal.* 5: 17. and as the regenerat part is at an advantage, the more vigorous is its oppoſition then againſt the flesh; yea againſt ſuch ſecret and Spiritual evils that may ly moſt near, from their natural temper and conſtitution, as their right eye, or right hand. *Matth.* 5: 29. 8. Is it not with a renewed ſtate by grace this alſo muſt be known, what the Spiritual way of ſervice to God in the deauties of Worship is, in the *newneſs of the Spirit, and not in the oldneſs of the Letter. Rom.* 7: 6. yea to know in ſome meaſure the *Spirit of Prayer*, which ſo ſenſibly *helpeth the infirmities of the Saints. Rom.* 8: 26. and what have you thus found to anſwer ſo plain an evidence and mark as this, of your ſtate and being in Chriſt? 9. Is there any thing dark or difficult here, that if you be *riſen with Chriſt*, this will natively reſult from the ſame *to ſeek the things that are above? Col.* 3: 7. *that where your treaſure is*, you will know then in ſome meaſure *to have your heart and deſire* following, *Matth.* 6: 21. And ſome comforting converſe with the thoughts of that glory which is to come, yea a rejoicing in the hope thereof when you ſhall breath in that ſweeter air of the higher Paradiſe, where love, joy, and oneneſs of heart with your bleſſed head, and the whole triumphant Church there ſhall then never admit the ſmalleſt interruption for all eternity. Now are not theſe few *marks* on ſuch clear and undeniable Scripture grounds, as it is ſtrange what ſhould make this a dark buſineſs to any, who would not make it their choice to hold faſt deceit, or goe down with a lie in their right hand to the grave, though the comforting and clear evidence, thereof be not the ſame at all times, nor in the ſame meaſure and degree alike to all.

Qu. VI. *Since there is no queſtioning the Truth & evidence of ſuch markes, where the Scriptures are ſo clear, I would deſire to know alſo, what length is that which ſome may come in a temporary work, and a being*

being an almost Christian, which is not saving; since this is my greatest interest within time, and knows not how soon the night cometh?

A. You have that sure and unerring record of the Scripture to goe to, where you may clearly see. 1. What a length there is in *a forme of knowledge Rom.* 2: *v.* 20. and *a forme of Godliness without power*. 2. *Tim* 3: *v.* 5: Yea that this may be in a high measure; and was not *Judas* one of the twelve? 2. It is there you may see, they have begun in the *Spirit* who have ended in the *flesh. Gal.* 3: 3. and what length such came *who received the seed of the word*, and had some discerneable growth a Little, yea *forth with sprung up. Matth.* 13: *vers.* 5, 6. *Part of which was chocked with these thornes of the cares of the world, and others did quickly wither and goe back, when persecution arose, having no solide root.* A Scripture which should be much thought on, and deeply laid to heart by all who would not be deceived about a heaven and blessedness for ever. 3. You may see there likewise what length the *foolish Virgins* came. *Matth.* 25: 8, 9. Who wanted not a *lamp* and Visible Profession before others, as might gain a name and testimony in their day, & yet shut out for ever. 4. The Scripture will let you see alsowhat eminent gifts, even Spiritual may be reached by a common work of the Spirit, where conversion was never known, *Lord have we not Prophesied in thy name* Mat. 22: 7. Yea that extraordinary inspiration is no infalible evidence of Sanctification. As in that strange instance of Balaam. 5. That some may *cry unto God, and make mention of his name, but not in truth*, you may read *Esai.* 48: 1. 6. *That there is a glorying in appearance, and not in heart*, you may see. 2 *Cor.* 5: 12. Nor is it strange to see this at such a height, as with *Jehu* to invite the world to see their *zeal for the Lord*, & to enquire at others, *if their heart be right*, whilst his own was most false, & unstraight. The world is no stranger to this what length of a Profession hath been to mask a private interest with such a shew and appearance: But let us consider these also. 1. That nothing is here either to wound

or affright the leaſt of the Saints, who are in earneſt how to be ſaved, ſince Truth in the inward parts is that great thing which the Holy God regards and takes pleaſure in and a few graines of this weigh down many talents of outward performances; *Let the Righteous ſtill hold on in his way, and he that hath clean hands wax ſtronger and ſtronger.* Iob. 17: 9. 2. It is a length that none can come whoſe heart is not in ſome meaſure ſincere before the Lord, to have their ſalvation through Chriſt ly ſo near, as to be under ſome fears and tremblings leſt they be deceived there in, ſo as they dare make a humble reference to the God of truth. *ſearch me and try, where in there may be any deceit or falſhood, and lead me in a right way.* Pſ. 139:23, 24. For when thus their *heart condemne them not, they may have confidence then before God.* 1 Ioh. 3: 21. 3. What ever hath been the furtheſt length of mens deceiving the world and themſelves at once anent their Religion, yet can it not put the leaſt blot on the ſpotleſs way of the Lord, and nothing doth the Scripture more dreadfully threaten, than any ſuch falſe ſhew; yea, it is there you may ſee this in it's true Colours and how horride it is. And the more it doth approach to Religion (which is ſo pure and undefiled) the more hateful and loathſome it is, ſo as even ſuch as comply therewith in themſelves, yet are enforced to loath it in others.

Qu. VII. *Though I am conſtrained to aſſent & ſubject to the Truth in what you have ſpoke, ſince there is no flieing before it, yet may it not be ſafe to admit ſome delay a little, whilſt men are in health, and ſtrength of their years, yea have ſo much oft to throng them from their neceſſar concernes in the world, and lay this over until age and ſickneſs may give more freedome, for being in ſuch earneſt about ſalvation, whilſt it is not a laying the ſame aſide, without ſome ſetled reſolution to follow it in a fit time?*

A. Do but take ſo much time now as to reaſon thus with your ſelf, and then judge, whether it can be ſafely deferred, which.

which. 1. Is *the one neceſſar thing*; and is not an eternity of ſuch weight, that if there were many ages enſured to us, much more a few dayes, which are wholly uncertain, here were enough to keep us in ſome continued throng. It is ſure, either heaven and a glory there for ever, and the truth of a hell and everlaſting torment muſt be to ſuch but a dreame, and a conjectural thing, elſe there could be no poſſible quiet without a knowing where they muſt dwell for ever. 2. Can this be deferred whilſt we ſee time makes ſuch ſwift diſpatch, and that it is ſure, while we now live and breath, we are a *dying* and hath it in ſome degrees begun, and advanced every hour of our life? and Oh! ſhould *dying* men keep at a diſtance from the thoughts of death, who ſo oft may hear it ſound; and the bell ringing for others? 3. Can this admit a *delay* to ſuch, were it but for ſome few dayes or hours, who cannot poſſibly be ſecured, when they ly down at night, but their breath may be ſtopped by a ſudden ſurpriſe of death ere they awake; yea thus ſleeps at an adventure of being ere the next day in an irrecoverably loſt ſtate? 4. Can there be a *delay* here by ſuch, who knowes not only the night is coming, when none can work, but are ſo uncertain, if the firſt touch of ſickneſs and approach of death be not a lethargy, wherein they can neither know, nor reflect on their own caſe, which I have known remarkably to have befallen ſome, who uſed to make ſuch an account, they would take Religion to heart, when once they were dying? 5. Is it not needful ſuch have the work of their day put by in the ſeaſon thereof, without a daring to lay it over; when to be ſick and die is ſo great and ſolemne a work by it ſelf? 6. Was it not then too late for the *foolish Virgins*, to ariſe and beſtirre themſelves, when they had loſt their ſeaſon of the Goſpel, or to make ready upon a *midnight* cry, when they had ſlept the time of their work and duty, and is not this put upon record by the Holy Ghoſt, for all after ages; *that they may be readie with their loines girded, and their lamps burning*, who know that death certainly is before them, and knowes not but that it come as a thief in the night? 7. Could they have

have an hours quiet, if their eyes were once opened to see that horrible pit they ly into of a Natural State, and what they are estranged from, of that blessed state of a Christian? But Oh! How little is this either understood or beleeved?

Qu. VIII. *I confess I must either shut my eyes, or admit the certainty of these things; to press a present seriousness in making sure work for heaven: But what you touched last of mens not understanding the state they are in, puts me to a new enquiry, if this can be meant of such as live under the light of the Gospel, yea converse with the same truths that others do, for what can the most discerning Christian see further in Scripture Truths, than such as exerce their reason and judgement about them as well as they: and what are these things that they have got a sight of, which those who are in the State of Nature, are wholly strangers unto?*

Ans. You know that it is no words can tell, what a thing day light is to them that never knew it, which can only be known by its own evidence; nor is it possible to give an account in another way of a spiritual discerning the things of God, which not in degree but kind is as far above the light of nature and reason, as that of the sun is above a Candle. O what another thing is a spiritual acquaintance with the things themselves held forth in the Scripture, than any notions or knowledge of the Doctrine thereof, which may enable to talk or dispute, whilst the power and efficacy thereof was never known on the soul: yea nor the writing of the Law upon the heart; and to *learne the truth as it is in Jesus. Ephes* 4: 21. but for answer to your proposal, I shall tell you in a few words what such are admitted to see, yea are perswaded of the undoubted certainty thereof, whilst others neither know nor see what they see, but are wholly strangers thereto. 1. The excellency and lovelinesse of their beloved Master, so as to them there is but one *Christ* in *Heaven* and in earth, whose roome none can fill but himself, yea can give that answer to such as enquire, *he is*

alto-

altogether lovely; that is their beloved, with whom none, none may offer to come in competition. *Cant.* 5:16. 2. They see and know *a reconci'ed God in Christ* with that assured evidence, as some times no cloud is betwixt Heaven and their soul, with that sensible intimation of Pardon and acceptance, as they are at the furtheſt sure, they see, feele and enjoy, what is not possible to expres to others. 3. It is not *that marvellous light* only breaks then in, at their first entry into a spiritual state, but there is a sight sometimes a Christian hath of Scripture Truths, and breaking up of some further discovery there to their soul, that if they would give all the world, they cannot have at other times. 4. Such know assuredly the truth of a *new nature*, which is so wonderful, and wholly a supernatural thing, wherewith natural reason can have no acquaintance, nor is it strange how much others are in the dark to this, who know so little of their own soul what it means, except by the power and operations thereof. 5. Do you ask what such know or discerne in the things of God to which most are strangers? they see the *Glory and beauty of holineſs*, *the truth of Spiritual things*, *which is the hidden things of God in a myſtery.* 1 *Cor.* 2: 7. yea thus are taken in to see these great things, not in a notion thereof, but in their Spiritual Nature, as they are sealed with power and efficacy on their soul? 6. It is given to such to know also, (which the Spirit only can reveale & teach,) what a sweet accord there is in these *Depths* of providence betwixt the Christians cross and their comfort, their being *caſt down*, *yet not deſtroyed*, *to be ſorrowful*, *yet alwayes rejoicing*, *yea in having nothing*, *yet to poſſeſs all things.* and are not these such things that could never possibly have entred into mens thoughts, if they were not made known from a higher airth? It is true, the furtheſt that any of the Saints know here is but in part, yea many a dark and sad overclouding are such oft under. O if the most discerning of natural men could know what such are with that certainty perswaded of, as they are of their own being.

Qu. IX. *Theſe are great things you ſpeake of, but ſince I have ſuch cauſe to know, what influence and power the things of this earth have, which lyes ſo near our external ſenſes: could I be as fully perſwaded of the certainty of theſe ſupernatural truths, and enjoyments of a ſpiritual life, to be ſure and undoubted realities, as what I touch and feele; I think then I had got the world much under my feet, yea in another manner ſhould look on the ſtrange madneſs and diſtraction of moſt this day, whoſe continued work is how to graſp after a ſhadow; whilſt they have no heart or deſire for what is the Chriſtians choice. I preſs this the more, ſince it is ſure, one cannot be throughly perſwaded of the truth of ſpiritual things as greateſt realities, and that there is a ſtate and life of Grace here, but they muſt be to the furtheſt ſure of that Life of Glory, which is to come.*

Ans. It is ſtrange, how ſuch as look but at a diſtance, are not dazeled more with amazement at the report of theſe great things of Religion, and what Chriſtians have in hope before them; but not to loſe time, let me beſeech your bringing theſe near your thoughts, when you are alone. 1 That it is an *Argument of Power*, not of words, which can fully quiet the ſoul of a Chriſtian anent this. 2. You may but judge what a ſad part that of the Saints were, if in this life their *hope* were only, or what could poſſibly be comforting to moſt in ſuch a day, whoſe griefs are in earneſt, if the Truth and Comforts of a ſpiritual life ſhould be a doubtful thing to them. 3, What gain or intereſt could any ſuch poſſibly have to deſigne a falſe Witneſs and Teſtimony, yea, with ſuch aſſured confidence, from experience, if they were not at the furtheſt certainty thereof; yea thus to converſe ſo much in the Duties of Godlineſs, where you ſee they cannot be but a toile to the flesh, if the peace of God, and Joy and Comforts of the Spirit

Spirit were but a naked ſhew? For this were to render themſelves both deſperatly wicked and miſerable at once, without any profit. Or what think you would make the affectionat parents preſs ſo much ſeriouſneſs in following the Lord on their Children, and thus put them on ſo ſad a bargane, whom they ſo dearly Love, if they knew it not to be their true intereſt here and for ever? 4. You know the Doctrine of the Goſpel is a Doctrine of *Holineſs*, whither the whole of that bleſſed contrivance doth moſt nativeley reſolve. And is not the truth hereof write forth in ſuch viſible realities before your eyes, as it may be no leſs manifeſt in its *Examples* than *Precepts*? I hope there is no debating here. 5. It is ſure, the diſcoveries of the word do not direct men to things a far off, but to ſuch as brings the great things of the Goſpel *near*, even in to their heart, ſo as to handle and feele by experience the truth thereof; and you know the conſolation of the Spirit is not by words, but by *things*, giving into the ſoul a ſpiritual and ſenſible experience of the reality thereof, and of the *Love of Jeſus Chriſt* let forth to them. 6. And are not theſe marvellous effects and operations of the Spirit of God, in ſubduing the ſoul by grace, ſo as to embrace an afflicted lot and tribulation for the Goſpel, to *take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods*, yea to dip their hands in the blood of a beloved ſin, and find delight thus in doing violence to the flesh, ſuch as may shew that it is ſure, Chriſtians muſt know & enjoy, what they and moſt of the world are ſtrangers to? And is it not above nature, or the furtheſt of humane reach to learne to be *meek, humble, lowly, Patient in ſuffering, and ſelf denying*? 7. Such have loſt a ſpiritual taſte, or never had it, who knowes nothing of that incomparable ſweetneſs, which is in ſecret converſe with God; that thus there is not a claime only to that glorious ſtate which is above, but the *firſt fruits* and *earneſt* ſo real, as will change the very countenance after ſome ſpecial times of neer fellowship with Jeſus Chriſt, ſo as in the greateſt compoſure, they can ſay, I ſurely *feele*, I *enjoy*, & *am ſure*, for the truth thereof. 8. What frequent tranſports

of

Joy and delight have been in Christians extremest sufferings for the truth, yea some times after a dark and dismal cloud over their soul? And why do not men enquire what should his meane, or how such a thing were possible, if they had not got a sight, that could look them out of pain and trouble? Let me but further add, how strange, (but yet I hope no rare or unusual sight) is that of the *outward man decaying* or mouldering down to the grave, when the *inward man* is more discerneably strong and vigorous, than in times of greatest health?

Qu. X. *I make not this question here, to debate, but to be further confirmed in the certainty of the truth, which is the greatest joy men can have on the earth, but I must confess, the greatness of these things is such, as may put the most Established to a stand; yea is it a small businesse to be under such a call to embrace and accept of Iesus Christ in the offer of the Gospel, and in him of a crown of Glory that fadeth not away, and is there not cause of fear for such as I am, to adventure here, which is so high, and far above what I can possibly think of?*

A. This must be matter of astonishment and wondering for all eternity, and it were well, if such an exercise were more begun here, to enquire and wonder at what we know of the great truths of the *Gospel*; but it is sure, it were the highest of pride, not humility to hold back where the Holy God calls; or for a perishing man not to throw out his armes and swime to *a rock*, when it is before his eyes, and is not the *Gospel* such a contrivance, as the whole of the Saints since the beginning could not possibly have a wish beyond the same, to shew forth that marvellous condescendence, freedome and plainness which is there, yea where none can be affrighted away who with desire did ever follow to this blessed airth. But since this is of such concerne, not for a Christians Peace and Personal Encouragement only, but to bear witness to the blessed way of the Lord;

Lord, and ſhew how deſperat an Oppoſition theirs muſt be, whoſe hearts are not melted and gained by ſuch inexpreſſible tenderneſs and *condeſcendence* of the Goſpel; let me ſpeak theſe few words. 1. You know that ſuch this is, as none can come wrong, if they *come* but in truth upon ſuch an errand, as the felt *need* of Jeſus Chriſt: and therefore is the Scripture ſo expreſs here. *Joh.* 6: 37. *and whoſoever cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out, ſais he who is faithful and true,* yea ſuch, as the whole of the Scripture doth remarkeably ſhew, See *Rev.* 22: 17. *and whoſoever will, let him come and take of the waters of Life.* 2. Such is his way, on whom the alone weight of his peoples intereſt and ſalvation leanes, as he both formes the deſire of the ſouls of his people, and ſatisfies the ſame; nor can there be in truth a *hungring* and deſire after him, but their Enjoyment is thus begun. *Matth.* 5: *verſ.* 6. 3. What can be more *condeſcending*, than his way is to the loweſt, whoſe ſoul doth but in a ſerious *look* follow, when it is in truth, when there is almoſt no more can be reached. *Eſai.* 45: 22. if thus the heart be but laid open to ſeek a relief in him, yea to *look as a far off* to that, even to which they fear to approach. 4. And is not ſuch his way, that the greateſt thing he moſt expreſſly requires in the ſaddeſt caſe of felt and diſcovered guilt, is to *flee* in but for ſhelter to him from that dreadful purſute of an awakned conſcience? yea how marvellous is this that as their face is towards the *Goſpel*, there is the moſt ſenſible inlet to *contrition* and brokenneſs of heart, and ſerious exerciſe of repentance. which as a ſweet and native reſult followes thereon? O! what is given for the furtheſt clearing hereof in the Scripture? See *Zach.* 12: 10. *Act.* 5: 31. 5. Such is his way, as he hath come under bond and promiſe by his faithfulneſs to make forthcoming to his people, which is only of grace, he hath promiſed to give what he requires, yea *to work their works in them, as well as for them,* *Eſai.* 26: 12. 6. Such is his condeſcendence, that his peoples ſecurity ſhould

leane on nothing in themſelves, not on their own *apprehending but being apprehended. Phil.* 3: 12. Yea that when any of his people, broken under the ſenſe of guilt have no Argument to make uſe of; or confidence to adventure, he finds them one in himſelf. *Hoſ.* 13: 9. *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf, but in me is thy help.* 7. Such is his way, where there is no exception of perſons, but the poor made moſt dearly welcome, and brought near in his offer; *when the proud*, were they the greateſt Monarchs in the earth, *he knowes a far off.* 8. This is he, and ſuch is his bleſſed way, as the ſeverity of the *Law* muſt ſerve for that very end, to commend *Jeſus Chriſt* and lead in to him, and the felt weight of ſin bring a begun cure and relief therewith in the felt need of a Saviour. *Matth.* 11: *v.* 28. 9. Such is his bleſſed way, as yet *did never break a bruiſed reed nor quench a ſmoking flaxe*, *Eſai.* 42: *v.* 3. Nor put ſuch back, whoſe feare to adventure made them to ſtand a far off, with the poor *Publican. Luk.* 18: 13. Yea of whom, all who ever knew him muſt bear him this witneſs, he is tender and compaſſionat in his ſharpeſt reproofs; and when he wounds ſoreſt, then is it *that he doth moſt earneſtly remember with the ſounding of his bowels towards them. Jer.* 31: 20. 10. Such is he, & his way towards his Church here upon the earth, as he hath given ſome peculiar Lines in his Word, of his tender regard to ſuch, even beyond others, who are moſt *deſtitute* of outward help *Pſal.* 146: *v.* 7, 8, 9. *Pſal.* 40: *laſt.* And comes ſo low to take in thoſe that are moſt rejected of others, and may have leaſt notice or regard at the time, and therefore, when he was himſelf on the earth, he was *called a friend of Publicans and ſinners*, *Matth.* 11: 19. 11. Such is his way, whoſe peace and acceptance hath ſo oft met his people, as a bleſſed ſurpriſal, when they knew leaſt how to adventure, and then given them a moſt unexpected welcome, when they have been under the greateſt fears *Pſal.* 18: 4: and 116: 3, 4. *Luk.* 15: 20. 12. Such is his way and marvellous *condeſcendence*, where mercy gets

gets a preference to *ſacrifice. Matth.* 9: v. 13. Where the widowes *mite* gives more in a little, than theſe of a great eſtate with much, being in ſingleneſs of heart thus given for the Lord. *Luk.* 21: 3. Yea where one half of the Chriſtians work is in a right and ſerious aime therein, and *is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* 2 *Cor.* 8: 12. I ſhall but further add on ſo great a ſubject, that ſuch is his way towards his people, as he not only calls, but *cauſeth* their ſoul to approach to him, by an inward touch of his power thereon; yea this moſt diſcerneably, when nothing elſe hath been left but to pray, and roll over their caſe on his bleſſed hand.

Qu. XI. *Theſe are great things you ſpeake of, and it is ſure, muſt be to ſuch as ever knew what a wounded ſoul is, under the tender hand of this bleſſed healer; but for that you have laſt mentioned of ſuch a call and acceſs for Chriſtians to pray; yea that aſſuredly the prayers of ſuch on earth goe up to Heaven, and are heard and accepted there, ſo as at all times, and under every weight and preſſure, we may come and preſent our requeſts to the Glorious God, who lives and ſees. This, I muſt ſay, ſeemes to me one of the moſt marvellous things in practical Religion, yea hath put me to a ſtand, how men who are ſo much taken, as in a tranſport, with ſome ſingular experiment in nature, yet have ſuch ordinary thoughts of this, if they be perſwaded of its truth.*

Ans. This is marvellous indeed, though the way of moſt ſeeme to bring under debate, if *prayer* be any thing more than ſome empty forme, or a piece of invention, rather than ſo great and ſerious a buſineſs; but I hope you know, 1. That none ever was called to take this on truſt, or implicity credit the Teſtimony of others, but

there is a ſolemne appeale here to every ones perſonal *trial*, for the truth and certainty hereof. 2. That it is with the firſt being of Chriſtians, and when once a ſpiritual life is formed in the ſoul, how *prayer* then is as their natural work, like the tendency and breathing of the child after the breaſts. 3. And is it not clear that ſuch have got a new acquaintance, and muſt know another *ſociety* than men, to make their retirements ſweet and deſireable; yea that continued haunt and reſort to this bleſſed airth, ſhewes the truth of commerce and trading with another world, is known to ſuch with the greateſt of certainty? 4. Do but judge what could be poſſibly comforting to a Chriſtian, when the lower ſprings of their encouragments are ſo viſibly ſhut up, if this *ſpring* and paſſage were not open and tried in their ſureſt experience. Is it eaſy to rejoice, and be comforted, when all things without do moſt remarkeably frowne, or to beare cheerfully out in ſuch a day, when they may be preſſed above meaſure, if there were not ſuch an airth the world knowes not of? & how it is the Chriſtians mid-night *ſongs* under the croſs, have been oft ſweeter than in any times of their outward proſperity; does it not witneſs, that its no naked form or ſhew could ever anſwer to this? 5. And when you ſee ſuch diſcerneable advantage ſome of the followers of God in their day have beyond others, yea ſometimes beyond themſelves, in a vigorous and tender Chriſtian walk; could this be but further followed: How eaſy were it to find, that thoſe are they, who are moſt in the work and exerciſe of *prayer*, which hath ſo cloſs an intercourſe with the *vitals* of Chriſtianity; nor can ever one inſtance be given of ones flouriſhing and being fruitful in the way of God, and not much under the ground in this exerciſe, which is moſt an internal thing, where the loudeſt cry to Heaven maketh oft the leaſt noiſe.

Qu. XII. *Theſe I confeſs, are clear, but what would*

would moſt help to make this duty both comforting and eaſy, whilſt there is ſuch difficulty to many, how to expreſs themſelves this way, and others find it a ſore wearineſs to the flesh, yea leſs eaſy to be thus alone, and take ſome time for ſecret prayer, than to wait on publick duties, or joine with others in ſuch a work?

Answ. I hope you know. 1. That as our tye to the publick duties of worſhip is great and indiſpenſible, to improve fellowſhip with others in the exerciſes of Godlineſs, yet moſt of a Chriſtian and his work, is that which is leaſt ſeen, and lyes hid from the view of others; yea the moſt weighty duties of Chriſtianity are the more retired and ſecret duties thereof, ſo that a true meaſure of a Chriſtian, muſt not be from what he is in publick, and converſe with others, but what he is *alone*, where he lies open to his witneſs, who ſearcheth the heart. 2. Such can only blame themſelves, and are ſadly eſtranged from the truth of Godlineſs, if they know nothing elſe, but to be alone in their retirements, who are then called to an immediate fellowſhip with God in Chriſt, and to know the truth thereof on trial. 3. You know a natural motion is eaſy and without conſtraint, and were this once underſtood, how prayer is a ſoul-work, and to carried forth from inward principles of a new nature then what was a ſore toile here, becomes their ſweeteſt delight; for to pray, is not an expreſſing to the Lord what ſhould be ones deſires, but a preſent breathing of the ſoul in deſires after him: when the pleaſure of Religion is ſo known with the power and life thereof. 4. The more weight and burden of the Chriſtians caſe on himſelf, is a tried help for more facility and life in the work of prayer. O what ſweet and refreſhing hours have ſome ſad and preſſing burdens oft helped Chriſtians to, which they ſhould not have known otherwiſe? 5. The more frequency and continuance cauſeth true delight and free-

dome in this exerciſe, as the wearing out and neglect of this duty will quickly weare ſuch out of any delight there, yea to make them diſreliſh any other part of Religion.

Qu. XIII. *But is it not ſore to continue in prayer, when there is no viſible returne; yea that after moſt ſenſible and felt acceſs in this duty, there ſeemes oft a thicker darkneſs to follow?*

Answ. It is not ſtrange, though this be a trial indeed; yea ſometimes in a more than ordinary way ſearching, which put the faith of ſo great and eſtabliſhed a man to this ſtand, as to cry out *Pſ.* 69: 3. *I am weary with my crying, my throat is dry, while I wait for my God.* But let us conſider therewith. 1. That through the whole of the Scripture, it is ſo clear to be the Lords uſual way to confirme before he try, yea to follow the greateſt confirmations of his peoples faith, with ſome remarkeably ſharp *trials*. 2. The waiting Chriſtian could yet never ſay, a return came too late, but in the moſt fit and opportune ſeaſon, even when it hath been longeſt deferred. How ſtrange would theſe ſeeme, yet moſt ſweetly accord. *Luk.* 18: 7, 8. *though he bear long, yet will he avenge ſpeedily?* 3. Is it a ſmall thing to be *anſwered with ſtrength in your ſoul*; and for being helped to wait, until the outgate more fully break up, ſince a divine power may be no leſs marvellouſly ſeen in the Chriſtians ſupport, than in the moſt aſtoniſhing delivery? 4. Is not a ſubdued Spirit, with a humble reſignation to the Lord under a long deferred hope, a higher mercy, when truely conſidered, than the thing it ſelf which we moſt follow? And are theſe loſers, where thus more is given, than what they either ſought or hoped for. 5. Is not this the ſureſt way to make haſte by onwaiting, and the choiceſt mean to gain time, and bring a Chriſtian and his deſire ſooneſt together? Which was the witneſs of a moſt experienced Chriſtian, I *have with much longing ſought*

ſuch

ſuch a thing from the Lord, yet got no returne, but when once I was helped through grace to give him his will, and to be reſigned wholly thereto, then was it he gave me my will alſo in what I had ſought? 6. The more prayer and wreſtling hath come betwixt the Chriſtians trial and outgate, is it not found the more comforting and ſweet, when it hath come? that whilſt *hope deferred makes the heart ſick*, yet how great an intereſt does it pay in for the furtheſt loſs and pain in onwaiting, when as a *Tree of life*, it hath at laſt bloſſomed after many a winter ſtorme? 7. *His thoughts are not as ours, and his way not as ours. Eſai.* 55: *verſ.* 9. We ſee not at preſent nor can fathome the depths of divine providence; and how needful it is to have the heart brought low, that not only *patience might have its perfect work*, *Jam.* 1: 4. but a Chriſtians being more fitted for the deſired mercy. 8. But what do you expect, which is not of free and marvellous grace? For to continue in prayer is an expreſly commanded duty, though no ſenſible fruit, or income ſhould follow, yea can bring no price in its hand, to obtain what we ſeek. And ſhould theſe quarrel with onwaiting, who have all this kept in their ſight, I *am not worthy of the leaſt of the mercies thou haſt ſhewed to thy ſervant. Gen.* 32: 10? 9. Could we ever know the uſe making and comfort of theſe great Promiſes to *onwaiters*, ſuch as, *Eſai.* 30: *ver.* 18. and 40: *v.* 31. *Pſal.* 25: *verſ.* 3. If grace were not thus kept in exerciſe.

DIALOGUE III.

QUEST. I.

SInce we ſhould find our delight moſt, where our true intereſt and greateſt concernes ly; the late occaſion we

had to converſe together on ſo neceſſar, and weighty a ſubject, doth preſs me to follow the ſame yet further, and to gain ſuch an hour, when ſo many are unprofitably loſt; and now let me ſeriouſly ask, may there not be a ſafe owning of ſome more laxe conception of practical Religion, *than what you have hitherto ſpoke ſeems to allow, ſince it ſeemes very ſad and affrighting to look on ſo great a part of thoſe, who own the Doctrine of the* Church, *if there be not ſome greater latitude for* Chriſtians, *both in their principles and practice, yea whilſt this wants not a great patrociny in the preſent time?*

ANSWER.

It is not ſtrange, where the truth is not received in love, that men kindle a light to themſelves, and walk in the ſparks thereof, but I hope you debate not the Scripture, where the ſafe way of being eternally ſaved can only be known; yea, that it is ſure, could we make this way more large and broad, there were no conceiveable intereſt or gain to conceale the ſame, which were ſo pleaſing to moſt in theſe times. But ſince there is *one way*, and here alone muſt all the redeemed of the Lord get ſafe to that bleſſed land which is above, I hope ye dare own no other conception thereof, than is there expreſly ſhewed. 1. That it is ſuch, where there is no poſſible *latitude* for ſhifting off Fear, Tenderneſs and Diligence in our Chriſtian walk, and thus to make ſure for eternal life. 2. That this is the *ſtrait and narrow way*, where the multitude is not to be found, even of ſuch as are under the outward call of the Goſpel; and it is ſure, another way will never be found to the ſecond coming of Chriſt. *Luk.* 13: *v.* 24? 3. Such, as there can be no following the Lord there with a bid reſerve, or regarding iniquity in the heart. *Pſ.* 66:

Pſal. 66: 18. or a cleaving to any private intereſt, ſo as to keep it up deliberatly, and not adventure the ſame for Jeſus Chriſt, were it as their *right eye, or right hand. Matth.* 5: 29? 4. There is no poſſible conception of Religion men can have from the Scripture, to take off that indiſpenſible neceſſity of the *new birth*, and writing of the Law upon the heart by the Spirit of God, yea thus to know Religion as an internal thing, which muſt firſt begin at the heart, before it come to the practice. *Joh.* 3: 3. 5. It is beyond debate alſo, that men muſt bring not their work only, but their thoughts and the principles of their motion to that Teſt of the *Law*, which is Holy and Spiritual. *Matth.* 5: 28. and that what be done, it be from integrity and uprightneſs of heart. But it is ſtrange, what is there to enforce any to this, when ſuch is the way of the Lord, that if there could be a latitude for a change, I am ſure, none ever who knew it on trial, could have a wiſh or deſire beyond what it is, nor is it poſſible for any to know the ſpirituality and power of Religion, and not know that ſweetneſs and facility, that is thus in following thereof.

Qu. II. *I cannot debate ſuch clear and evident truths, though it may be matter of aſtonishment to ſee, what eſſayes are by many, to oppoſe not only the power and ſpirituality of Religion in its practice, but in its principles alſo. But what do you meane by the delights and ſweetneß thereof, you have now ſpoke? Is it not from what is in hope, and in another world, but not here in the preſent enjoyment; ſince you know what prejudice is every where againſt this way, yea nothing ſeems more ſad and afflicting than the Chriſtians life within time, ſo as it is not conceiveable oft what can be comforting in their lot?*

Answ. This queſtion, though ſtrange and amazing in it ſelf, yet is not for ſuch as look but at a diſtance on the truth of Godlineſs, that lyes ſo hid and deep upon the

ſoul

ſoul, and to whom a Chriſtians life is indeed a miſtery, but I judge it be not eaſy even for ſuch to ſhift off, or get hid from their eyes the truth of theſe things, which ſo clearly ſhew the alone ſweet and deſireable lot within time, muſt be that of a ſerious Chriſtian, what ever the world be to him; with which. 1. The greateſt Princes, the rich, and thoſe that have lived moſt in the pleaſures of this life, would be glade to *die* and joine intereſts then. 2. Is ſuch, as hath made it ſweet and eaſy, yea on deliberat choice to many, to quite their greateſt intereſt and Comforts within time; which fleſh and blood could never have parted with, if the *exchange* had not been known to be much more gainful. 3. How deſirable is that *lot*, where the Chriſtian can follow his intereſt, by being *abaſed* as well as *abounding*, and by every thing that doth occurre, may know how to be furthered thus in his way; yea riſe by that which would moſt ſeeme to bear him down, and lay him in the duſt; yea thus to gain by greateſt loſſes. 4. Such is the Chriſtians lot, that as his duty and Comfort can never part, or the Teſtimony of his Conſcience anent integrity and ſtraightneſs ceaſe to be matter of his rejoicing, ſo a ſerious ſubjecting and reſignation to the Lord, will never ceaſe to be his reward alſo in the cloſe. 5. How ſad and afflicting this lot may o't ſeeme, it is here alſo their *Joy* is ſowen by weeping, where that *Seed* was never yet loſt *Pſal.* 126: 5? 6. Would you truely know the ſweetneſs of a Chriſtian lot? O do but come near and *try*, what Joy and Satisfaction is to be found in the cottage of ſuch as knowes the truth of living near God, and under the lively hope of the Glory which is to be revealed, more than in the moſt ſtately & magnifick dwellings of others; what the mornings and evenings of many ſuch are, their hid and retired walks, yea their Comforts ſometimes in the night ſeaſon; how ſweet to tell the hours, as they are going by, which they know are bringing them more near to the eternity of Joy, and putting over ſome part

of

of their appointed griefs here; with what refreshment these can look up to the Heavens, to the Sun, Moon and Stars, and triumph in the works of his hand, who hath formed the same, whilst they know what a marvellous change ere long shall be in their state, when they shal be above these, yea *shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdome of their Father. Matth.* 13: *v.* 43. Hath not such, and they only the most desireable part even here, yea can truely feast upon their browu bread, with a satisfaction, beyond what ever the voluptuous man knew, who knowes not that true peace & serenity of mind in Jesus Christ, which guardes the heart from that dreadful sting that followes on the pleasures of sin? It is such can truely say (which was the word of one of the Ancients) O *quam suave est carere hisce suavitatibus, how sweet to him was it to want these carnal delights, wherein others were wallowing*; whilst their all is in Jesus Christ. But if you say, why isnot this more discerneable amongst Christians? is not the cause here, that a living and vigorous Christian is become so rare a sight at this day? 7. It is these, who with Joy can converse with the thoughts of approaching death, whilst the *sting* and *terrour* thereof is taken away. 8. It is these, who in the serious observing of providences both to themselves and others needs look no where, where they may not see what should tend to a further strengthening of them in the way of truth, and that the God whom they serve, assuredly is what he hath declared himself to be. 9. It is these, who with greatest quiet dare commit their interest to him, as *knowing in whom they have beleeved*, and what ever confluence of manifold temptations may sometime meet in their lot, yet knowes they *shall not be tempted above measure*, but are still under his tender and watchful care, who even while he smites with one hand, does uphold with the other. 10. Such is their lot; as that which would seeme the greatest pain in the Study of Godliness, which is by Mortification, to do violence to the flesh and lusts thereof,

thereof, leads in alſo the greateſt pleaſures and delights.

Qu. III. *I muſt confeſs, it is ſtrange what prejudice moſt have at ſerious Godlineſs which they never knew upon trial: But what you meane in this laſt inſtance of that intereſt* Mortification *to the fleſh hath, in the Comforts and Enjoyments of the Chriſtians life, is ſuch I cannot eaſily comprehend.*

Answ. This can alone be known upon trial. Yet do but ſeriouſly conſider theſe 1. That the Scripture hath ſo expreſly conjoined them together. *Matth.* 11:29. *take my yoke on you, and learne of me &c. and you ſhall find reſt to your ſoul*, which would ſeeme a ſtrange way to ſo deſireable an enjoyment. 2 You know this alſo to be atteſted by the Saints in all ages, and with the greateſt certainty of *trial*, what inexpreſſible ſweetneſs and delight they have known and experienced in a ſuffering lot for Chriſt, and in ſuch things, which in themſelves were moſt imbittering and grievous to the *fleſh*. 3. None yet ever knew the Truth and Power of Religion, and not this alſo, that by a *natural* reſult, what ever tends to an abatement of the power of ſin, in reſiſting thereto, how ſore and grieving ſoever it would ſeeme at firſt, leads into the greateſt Delights and Comfort in the cloſe. 4. It is here the Chriſtians promiſed reward to wreſtling againſt corruption, and a *Body of Death*, is in ſome degree given in, ſo as to know upon their own ſoul the Truth of that *Peace*, which is in a cloſs walking by this bleſſed rule of the Scripture. *Gal.* 6:16. 5. And what a ſweet Jubilee hath oft followed in their ſoul, on reſiſting and getting victory over ſome predomlnant evil, beyond what ever was known, in the furtheſt yeelding and indulgenee to the fleſh? 6. Is not the moſt truely Comforting uſe and enjoyment of the world found, by having the heart much ſubdued thereto, and thus kept off that dreadful *rock*

of

of Love to the World, and eager desires after the same, whereon so many thousands have at last made shipwrack?

Qu. IIII. *What are there not allowed desires after the world; and that it is truely warrantable for men to seek a further increase to their estate, and some larger interest this way?*

Answ. Since this is an unquestionable *Talent* men have for their *Masters* use, and are accountable for, it puts it beyond question, that there is both a warrantable following and enjoying thereof, with Christian Sobriety; but these also would be deeply pondered herewith. 1. That *Love to the world and things thereof*, is so expressly a Scripture signe of a reprobat state. 1 *Joh.* 2: 15. and that *no covetous shall inherit the Kingdome of Heaven* 1 *Cor.* 6: 10. which was so convincing in the primitive times, as *Covetousness* upon any visible evidence was then a publick scandal of the Church. 2. How such is the *deceitfulness* of riches, as is shewed by our blessed Lord himself. *Mat.* 13 *v.* 22. that as *briars and thornes* this native tendency is to *choak* the Word of the Gospel, and make it unfruitful, even whilst it seemes to have come forward some length. And if any cannot bear this, who may be in saddest hazard to split on such a *rock*, let them but go in and try the Scripture thereanent; and not think strange, that we neither may nor dare conceale the truth herein, without applying it to mens Conscience.

Qu. V. *What suteable improvement is that which is necessarily called for, of the measure and talent which men have of things of the world, as might most tend to a solide peace and quiet of mind before the Lord herein, and to guard against such dreadful and evident hazard of eternal perishing, or spliting on that rock, on which the Holy Ghost hath set so signal a* Beacon, *by most expreß and multiplied warnings from the Scripture?*

Answ.

Answ. It is a great propoſal you now make, to which in a few words, and with ſome ſeriouſneſs I ſhall make this anſwere. 1. To conſider what uſe ye would chooſe to make, or wiſh to have made of your intereſt in the world, if ye were at this hour to *die*, ſo as with peace on ſuch an account to enter into eternity. 2. That this is not left arbitrary to any their trading with ſuch a *Talent*, and be concerned how to conſecrat the gain thereof to the Lord; but it is a High Peece of Juſtice, and no leſs neceſſity to ſhew mercy to thoſe who are truely diſtreſſed, than to pay our *Debts*, ſince the great Lawgiver hath not left this indifferent more than the other, as is clear. *Luk.* 16: 10, 11, 12. 3. You would conſider that *riches* is given to men as *Stewards*, and not *Proprietors*, *Matth.* 25: *v.* 14. I meane ſo as to reckon they may do herein at their own pleaſure; and is unfaithfulneſs here a ſmall weight to ly on the Conſcience, and have no other account of their *Maſters goods* to give, but that they applyed them to their own uſe only? 4. Do but lay to heart, that ſuch is this great Duty, in a faithful anſwering to ones *Talent* and meaſure of the things of the world, in a tender reſpect to the *Condition* and *Neceſſity of the Saints*, as in the Day of the Lord it is moſt noticed, and that which will be brought in *Judgment* againſt the reprobate, yea on which that dreadful *Sentence* there paſſeth, *depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting fire &c. Matth.* 25: *verſ.* 41. 5. To be faithful thus in anſwering to that *Talent* is clear, that it is to give and lay out your ſelf this way, where you can expect no returne, or Compenſation, otherwiſe it is but a ſelf intereſt you follow, and not a giving to the Lord, nor is it *a caſting thy bread on the waters*, *Eccleſ.* 11: 1. 6. To be faithful here is ſomething elſe than that occaſional *outgiving to the neceſſities of any*, on ſome preſent and preſſing Object, ſince the *Scripture*, is ſo expreſs, that here ſhould be ſome proportion to every ones Meaſure and Eſtate, which ought to be ſeriouſly conſidered and laid aſide, for which ſee that appointment

Deut. 14:

Deut. 14: 22. & 16: 12. and how there it is held forth on moral & immutable grounds. 1 *Cor.* 16: 1. that every one ſhould, as his meaſure can admit, be concerned in the improvement thereof. 7. This is not to entertaine only ſome preſſing call for this end, when it comes their way, but to ſearch out the cauſe of the diſtreſſed. *Job.* 29: *v.* 16. *Eccleſ.* 11: 2. for thus *the liberal man deviſeth liberal things*, &c. even in ſeeking Objects, that ſo excellent a grace may not want its exerciſe, each according to his *Talent*, where it may be truely ſaid, they receive more than they give: Which was a choice word of one, *what ever I give, that I have*, whilſt the *withholding* of that which is thus required, hath viſibly *tended to poverty* in many ſignal inſtances. 8. To be faithful here, is to have a ſerious reſpect to the end; that it *be to a Diſciple in the name of a Diſciple*, with a due regard to their preſent diſtreſs, and not by *partiality*, on ſome private intereſt and reſpects that may riſe thereto, elſe they have cauſe to feare, that both Principal & Intereſt is loſt, nor can they put this debt on the Lord, where ſuch a ſad bvaſs is with it. *Matth.* 10: *v.* 42? 9. To be faithful here is to follow this *cloſly*, ſo as *not to be ſeen of men*, elſe ſuch have their *reward*, where this is an influencing motive, yea not to let the *left hand know what the right hand doth. Matth* 6: 3. Here the giver ſhould ſhut his eyes when he opens his hand, with deſire that it may never be known, untill the day of the Lord, that great day of retribution, when that which hath been done in ſecret ſhall be rewarded openly. *Mat.* 6: *v.* 4? 10. Here alſo is to be underſtood to give without grudging, cheerfully, as the true way to lay up treaſure to themſelves, knowing that *the Lord loves a cheerful giver.* 2 *Cor.* 9: 7. 11. To be faithful here, is to be given to *Hoſpitality*, with a tender regard forentertaining of *ſtrangers*, for in ſuch habite *Angels have been entertained. Heb.* 13: *v.* 2. 12. The bounds and limites of our actings here muſt not only be the *houſhold of faith*, but a Tenderneſs, Condeſcendence and Readineſs to help and relieve any diſtreſſed

distreſſed, even the Worſt of men, as they have opportunity, which is ſo expreſly required 1 *Theſ.* 3: *ver.* 12. *to abound in love towards all men*, ſo as to do good, to be uſeful, and exerce Tenderneſs toward all, which ſhould be found a more effectual mean to gaine credit to the Goſpel, than what is the way of many, who have a name and repute of Religion in this age.

Qu. VI. *VVhat you have now ſpoke anent thoſe, who have a large intereſt in the world, and in what termes they have it, is undeniable, I confeſs, from the Scripture; but this concernes a few, in reſpect of ſuch as are of a* Low and meane Condition *in the VVorld, and what can theſe have to compenſe the want of ſuch a Talent and make their lot deſireable or ſweet?*

Answ. I hope you will not bring theſe things under queſtion, which may convincingly anſwer this. 1. That a ſerious Chriſtian could yet never be ſo *Low*, but he hath much more than he wants, though he ſhould be put to ſuch a reckoning with *Job*, I have now neither Children, Friends, Honour, or Eſtate in the world to call mine own: but I *know and am ſure that my Redeemer lives. Job.* 19: *v.* 25. and do you think that a mans lot, or the comfortable enjoyment thereof conſiſts *in the abundance of the things he poſſeſſeth Luk.* 12: 15. 2. Have the poor and deſpiſed cauſe to quarrel with their lot, if they be in truth partakers of the Grace of God, when it is ſo clear, there can be no ſubſtantial good in riches or honour, which the Lord hath caſt out of the Counſel of his Love towards thoſe, on whom he hath ſet his heart from eternity? 3. Yea hath he not deſigned the moſt of the Elect to a poor, Low and afflicted Condition here? *For you ſee your calling Brethren, how not many wiſe, not many noble &c. according to the fleſh hath he choſen,* 1 *Cor.* 1: 26, 27. 4. Hath not ſuch a peculiar income in the way of the Promiſe, which theſe who are *full*, and abound moſt in the world cannot.

cannot understand, and is not owned in the Scripture to be under such a necessity to live by faith, which made the Apostle give such a strange account, 2 *Cor.* 12; 9, 10. *I take pleasure in my infirmities, in distress, in persecutions, &c. that the power of Christ may rest on me.* O what strong and vigorous acts of faith and love have oft followed the Christians low and meane state in the World, whereto such as were at ease have been wholly strangers. 5. Have such cause to quarrel with a low and despised lot, who the less they have here, whilst they have a sure evident for Heaven, knowes they have the more before them? And whilst others may reckon what they have by year and property, can make another account what is their interest for all *eternity*, and not grudge the *hireling's* wages, who know they are *Sons*, and *to abide in the house for ever*, *Joh.* 8: 35. 6. Would such, were it put to their choice, *have their good things in this life*, or do they expect to find a Heaven out of Heaven, and is not that lot with greatest advantage suited to each of his Saints, that is most for promoting their eternal interest', and *to make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light. Col.* 1: *ver.* 12. 7. It is not by the bulk you can judge on the Christians condition here in the World, a little gold is of more value than a great heap of some other metals, and *a little that the righteous hath is more than the riches of many wicked*, *Psal.* 37: *ver.* 16. For there lyes the blessing; and what a difference is there betwixt such, whose heart is gone up after his *treasure*, that is laid up for him in Heaven; and those, who *mind earthly things* and have their heart in their belly, *Phil.* 3: *ver.* 19?

Qu. VII. *Such have a sweet and comforting part, whether the World smile or frown, who know there is an eternity of joy before them: But you see how many are not more low in their outward state, than dreadfully wicked and loose, without the least serious weight of Religion on their soul.*

Ans. This may shew, that no affliction, or the saddest lot here can of it self lead into Jesus Christ, without the efficacious and irresistible power of grace; but as to their part, who are so visibly active to their own ruine, I must say, there seemes not a more sad and astonishing sight, than such are, 1. Who thus follow the world with a weeping eye, and have their heart cleave so fast to it, which will scarce bestow one flattering smile on them, & knowes not what gain they might make of their present Affliction and strait. 2. Who thus *seek the living among the dead*, & their relieſe from the airth from whence they see they cannot have it, who have such greatest things laid in their offer, to make them here and for ever blessed. 3. That the very report of the *gain of Godlineß* should not press them once to be this length, to know upon trial, what might be the certainty thereof, and if such an advantage can be truely reached here, as to make the poor mans life more Sweet and Comforting under all the toile of his hand, than if he had the greatest estate of the earth. 4, It may seeme strange, what these can possibly reckon upon their Condition in being men, as desireable above that of the beasts of the field, who have so little either in hand, or hope to be comforting; to know only a sensual life with so small and almost indiscerneable advantage to satisfy the senses. It is true, many such entertain a hope of a blessednes to come, whilst they are wholly strangers to a life of grace here: But Oh! It is at such a rate, that the Scripture of God must be false, if theirs be true. 5 How amazing also is it, to see for what these perish, and lose their immortal soul, which is in it self a higher interest, than the glory and riches of all the Monarchies in the Earth, yea of more value, than the Sun and Moon? Yet as if this were but some triffle, how easily do such hazard the same for the smallest gain; yea it may be said, are content to serve Satan without the wages of visible pleasure and satisfaction which others have in the world. 6 Yea how strange is it, how many such, whose

whose trade and imployment lyes most at *sea*, who thus have such peculiar enforcing Arguments, to be serious about Religion, yet are so visibly loose in their walk, and strangers to a Christian life.

Qu. VIII. *It is sure, there are such of that imployment, and I hope not a few, whose being convincingly serious in the things of God, with a Christian walk, to the credit of the Gospel, is beyond question. But since what you have spoke as to many of these, is too visibly manifest, what are these pressing Motives and Argugumentsthat such, whose calling lyes most on the* Sea, *have more than others to take Religion deeply to heart?*

Answ. You may judge what a pressing call such have to be in greatest earnest about their eternal state. 1. Who are through most of their time so near a bordering with *eternity, in deaths often*: and their life hanging so frequently in suspence before their eyes. 2. Such, who cannot but have their conscience oft struck with the sense of a God-Head, by seeing his marvellous power shewed forth in the Depths, so as it may be said, they live and converse amongst *wonders*, to see that great Body of the *Sea*, how it is with such advantage made passable for Transport and Commerce; the regular course of its ebbbings and flowings, with the singular use and subserviency of the tides; how it is shut up also with gates and barres, and hath its *appointed bounds*, without which there could be no reason how a bank of sand could restraine the great Oceans breaking forth. O! what a book is thus spread open for sea-faring men to read, and bring near their thoughts with wondering, to Fear and Worship him, whose *voice is so known on the wighty waters*; who turnes the most impetuous storme into a calme at his pleasure, which is so far above all hinmane reach, & causeth the swelling of an enraged sea in a moment to know his command and be still. 3. What ought such to be, who have not only been oft surprised

with preventing mercy, when they were not aware from daſhing on ſome ſhelve or rock, or falling in on a bank of ſand, and thus brought out of greateſt hazard, even before they were put in fear: But have oft likewiſe been reſcued from the very Jawes of preſent Death, in that manner, when no viſible or ordinary means could ever have anſwered thereto. Oh! Can ſuch deliverance be ſo eaſily forgot, and what were then their thoughts of entring into endleſs eternity, and meeting *grim death* with ſuch a ſurpriſe? was it not then a matter of earneſt to pray? Or would you then have dared to break forth into an Oath? yea what a bleſſed ſtate were you then made to reckon thoſe in, who had been formerly ſerious about Religion, and how ſoon may ſuch a ſurpriſal meet you again? 4. What ought ſuch to be, and are accountable for, who knowes how many thouſands have been ſwallowed up in theſe devouring Depths, and hears of ſuch ordinary ſhipwracks, whilſt they are yet preſerved? Oh! Doth not this marvellous longſuffering and tenderneſs of the Lord have ſome ſerious voice? Hath it yet never tended to melt your heart with ſorrow and contrition, for ſo ſad a returne you have hitherto given to ſuch forbearance. 5. What ſolemne and expreſs engagements are many, if not moſt of ſuch under, and accountable for, *which their lips have uttered, when trouble was upon them*, and when they were at the very brink of periſhing, that if ſome extraordinary caſt of providence had been deferred but a very few moments longer, they had been loſt? Now ſet me ſeriouſly ask, what did you really intend? Was it to deale deceitfully with the moſt High, and be no more ſerious in the thoughts of this when ye were once at land? If it be ſo, how can you dare to pray and plead with the Holy Lord in a new Strait? Oh! let me beſeech you, lay this to heart, and that to make uſe of your preſent calmes at ſea, for making ſure your eternal intereſt, would help to make a ſweet calme within on your ſoul when a ſtorme ariſes. 6. Let me but add this

what

what advantage ſuch have, who have ſo clear an embleme of their life and condition here ſo frequently before them, how thus they are under ſaill, and moving to that port where once the anckor muſt be caſt down never to be weighed again: yea how there can be no ſafe reckoning to get ſafe to that bleſſed, O bleſſed and deſireable *port of glory*, without knowing how their courſe lyes, which from the Scripture is more infallibly clear, than they can be by any Carte or Compaſs? Let me but further add, how ſtrange it is to ſee ſome of theſe, ſo far from under the aw and dread of God; that they are not more concerned to put to *ſea*, and work on the *Sabbath*, without any convincing neceſſity, than on any other day?

Qu. IX. *What, is there ſuch a neceſſity for ſtrict obſervance of the Sabbath, as there is no warrantable liberty, both for recreation, and mens ordinary buſineſs, after the publick worſhip is once paſt?*

Ans. I hope you will not dare to debate, 1. That the *Chriſtian Sabbath* hath by the holy Ghoſt that impreſs and authority put upon it, of being the *Lords day*, a day which is ſet a part and conſecrat to him, on a higher account, than the firſt creation, wherein *God manifeſted in our nature did reſt from all his works, for the Redemption of his Church; and from the new Creation; and ſaw that all which he had done was very good*; that *day* never to be forgot, wherein the Redemption of his Church being perfected, he had a full acquitance for the whole debt of his elect Church; that *day* alſo, on which his moſt uſeall and ſolemne appearance to his Diſciples after his *Reſurrection*, was; and ſhall we deny ſuch a tribute of our obſervance thereof, on ſo great an account; and to him, who hath given us our time, *and is Lord of the Sabbath?* 2. Since it is the alone prerogative of God to make *a day holy*, and that the *firſt day of the week* is that piece of our time, which is only ſet apart for him under the *New Teſtament*, ſhould not ſuch a ſolemne and *conſecrat time* be applyed to ſpirituall duties? and is the higheſt of *ſacriledge* to turne that which is *holy* to

civill or common actions, when they are no works of neceſſity or mercy, for then is ſuch a day no more *holy* but common. 3. You know how deep the *prophanation* thereof hath been oft found to draw on mens conſcience, ſo as it is rare to ſee a *flagitious perſon* under any remorſe, when brought to a ſcaffold, but hath been then enforced to cry out of the breach of the *Sabbath*, and how their guilt herein did ſtare them in the face, as a provoking cauſe of what had thus befallen them 4. Should not theſe dreadfull *marks* of the holy *judgement of God*, which have been thus put both on perſons and places, have an aw and dread on mens conſciences; yea ſuch inſtances, with theſe ſignall and convincing circumſtances, as all might ſee, who looked but at a Diſtance thereon, the ſtroke pointing as with a finger, at the provoking cauſe? 5. Do we hope for an everlaſting *Sabbath* in heaven, whilſt here a few hours in ſpirituall converſe with God, and the ſouls reſting and ſolacing it ſelf in him, is ſo burdenſome a work; yea, whilſt it is ſure, the greateſt of delights and pleaſure known upon the earth are theſe which are Spirituall, to ſuch as ever knew what it is to be Chriſtians?

DIALOGUE. IV.

Quest. I.

Since we have had this occaſion to touch a little ſome of the great and weighty concernes of practicall religion, *I muſt yet preſs you with ſome few propoſals, anent the preſent* time *we are fallen in, when ſuch ſad appearances and a faint almoſt every where now is, ſo as many are like to give over, as men aſtonished, and loſe both their heart and hand at once in the matter of duty.*

An-

ANSWER.

We are indeed fallen in trying *times*. But conſider alſo 1. What great *confirmations* have been given in to the truth ere our night grew ſo dark, and have now loſt ſight of them all. 2. What kept the ſaints from ſinking an *hundred years* paſt, when to be burnt at the ſtake for the truth was one of the moſt uſuall leſſons of Chriſtianity; and to quite all for Jeſus Chriſt? Yea, whence was it, that their ſtrength and reſolution grew, as the tide grew ſtrong againſt them? 3. Look through the whole of the Scripture, and on the Churches condition under the New Teſtament, and I am ſure, nothing can be more clear than this, that the greateſt *triumph* that ever Jeſus Chriſt hath had in his followers, was not in calme and proſperous times from without, but when they were at the loweſt.

Qu. 11. *But how is it in ſuch times of abounding light, as theſe now are, that theſe great confirmations of the truth, which were then given in by the Saints, are now ſo rare, yea much unknown to moſt of this generation?*

ANS. The way of the Lord is ſtill the ſame, and in all times his word doth good to them that walk uprightly. But it may be clear. 1. How ſuch degrees of *peace, comfort and aſſurance* of the truth hath ſtill kept ſome proportion to ſome more remarkeable time and meaſure of the Saints ſufferings, *the ſpirit of God and of glory then reſting upon them.* 1 *Pet.* 4: 14. 2. Then was the *life of faith, a following of the Lord fully*, with a large venturing on hand in another manner known amongſt his followers, than it ſeemes to be at this day; and Oh! How rare a practice is it now to beleeve, when there are almoſt no ſenſible grounds to be comforting? 3 Though former ages had not that meaſure of light which is now, yet it may be ſeen how the aw and authority thereof was in another manner on the conſcience of Chriſtians, and their work to *live religion*, when there was no viſible inducement to profeſs the ſame, but for the

truths ſake; *but they endured, as ſeeing him who is inviſible*, and did live and feed on the very marrow and ſubſtance of Religion in another manner, than ſeemes by the moſt of Profeſſors now to be underſtood.

Qu. III. *VVhat might be the moſt effectuall mean for recovery, and to be led in the way of the promiſe of the Lords returning with theſe wonted* ſignes *of his preſence, when it ſeemes to be ſo dark and diſmall an hour now on the Church?*

ANS I hope with ſome aſſurance I may offer theſe. 1. That ſuch as love the truth would with greateſt ſeriouſneſs watch againſt the *preſent publick, and prevailing evills of the times*, to have their garments kept from the ſmalleſt touch and defilements thereof; I meane ſuch *evills*, after which the *multitude* moſt runs, where the countenance and favourable aſpect of *great men* ſeemes moſt to follow, and is a moſt remarkeable *contagion* in the time; for it is here the ſmalleſt acceſſion will draw deeper on the conſcience, & have a more difficult recovery than other perſonal infirmities, & a ſevere withſtanding thereto lead in to moſt ſenſible enjoyments of the Spirit of God. 2. Let us enquire where the *Teſtimony of the preſent day to the truth doth moſt ly*, which may be more peculiar to ſome of the *Reformed Churches* of Chriſt than others; for in a cloſs adherence thereto we may aſſuredly hope for the outletting of the ſpirit of God, from his own promiſe, of having a ſpecial reſpect thereto. *Rev.* 3: 10. *and* 12: 11; and herein *ſhould the truth make you free.* It hath been the bleſſed diſpoſall of the Lord, that this great intereſt of Chriſt in his *being King and head over his Church, and the alone Lawgiver thereto, and that his Kingdome is not only within on the ſouls of the Elect, but over his Church, as a viſible Politick body diſtinct from all the Kingdomes of the earth, is that great truth, which the Church of Scotland hath now in theſe late times had moſt peculiarly aſſigned to witneſs for* Yea this great truth we may ſee not there alone, but elſe where moſt viſibly oppoſed, & I hope will be owned, as the common cauſe of all the Reformed Chur-

Churches, to whom this crown and ſupremacy of their glorious head should be dearer, than all their intereſts within time. Great is that peace and joy will be found in a cloſs adherence thereto, a more large outpowring of the ſpirit might be hoped for to follow this Teſtimony, when it is now called for in the *ſeaſon* thereof. 3. What a hopfull preſage were it of the Lords returne in this day, if both private Chriſtians, and Miniſters of the Goſpell were found more preſt to bring into themſelves their deep acceſſion and share in the provoking cauſe of this *great wrath* now gone forth, and their being content to be *abaſed* and ly in the duſt, that the *unſpotted righteouſneſs of God* might shine forth? we might then aſſuredly hope for ſome more viſible ſignes of his preſence, and a more joint uniting in knowing both the cauſe and cure of our greateſt diſtempers. 4. What a bleſſed aſſay should this be to the Churches healing, if a greater *omeſs* amongſt the godly in theſe times, were with more deſire and intenſeneſs followed; who have this with ſuch expresneſs left by our great Maſter, not only for the credit of the goſpell, and promoting the intereſt thereof, but as a ſeale of our love and obedience to him? Oh! that ſo few are found with that ſuteable weight on their ſpirits to be concerned in this, as though this great duty of mutuall freedome, could not be managed with that humble ceding, and prudent tenderneſs to others, as might tend to a further cementing in love; yea to goe together in others hand without any jarre. Let the things of God have a preference to our own things, and our Maſters intereſt be dearer to us, than our ſelves; and Chriſtians will not then long be at ſo ſad a diſtance with others; both in their judgements and affections, but that bleſſed ſtrife ſhould moſt appear, how to ſtrive together, and not againſt other for the intereſt of Chriſt. Yea with this I muſt add, that which Chriſtians ſhould much ſtudy, and ſo natively reſolves in mutuall love and condeſcendence one to another, is *humility*, which when corruption cauſeth the mind to ſwell, will quickly help it to fall; and how ſad is it, that ſuch a name is not with

greateſt abhorrence entertained, as that of *a party*, or keeping in there with; what? is *Chriſt divided*? or is there any other *head* and *leader* than he? *who is Paul?* or *who is Appollos?* Or have we another intereſt, if we hope through grace to be accepted of him at his ſecond Coming, but his truth to contend for, which without any perſonall quarrell or bitterneſs, we ſhould with *Levi know neither Father nor Brother*? But oh! What we loſe oft in the very manner of our deport and following of duty, when there may be a ſerious aime on both ſides at one and the ſame ſcope, which calls much for a being alone, in a neer fellowſhip with God, to meet together with more advantage.

Qu. IV. *But you ſee under what reproach the way of the Lord is at this day, and how much the Credit of the truth ſuffers by ſore and ſubtill reflections that are caſt thereon.*

Ans. 1. What? doth this shake any, or render the truth doubtfull, if ever they knew the power and certainty thereof on their ſoul? for it is ſure, religion will never loſe weight with thoſe who know it in earneſt, under the greateſt cloud of detraction and contempt. 2. What can the furtheſt eſſayes of ſuch reach, who dare not avowedly deny the *Scripture*, but are enforced to own that which breaketh all their deſignes, ſince it is enough, the Teſtimony of God in his word is ſure? nor can the Sun ceaſe to ſhine, what ever thick vapours may darken the air a little to us. 3. Do but ask the greateſt *Reproacher* of godlineſs, what his thoughts are, when *death* is looking him in the face, if he will put this in his Teſtament, or adventure to ſeale ſuch a witneſs with his dying breath. O, is it not then, that the mockers are enforced to confeſs they now find religion to be a matter of earneſt. which before they ſcoffed at.

Qu. V. *But it ſeemes ſtrange, what quiet and confidence many ſuch, who are viſible haters of the truth, and of the power of Religion, own in their way?*

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Answ. Friend, this is one of the ſad miſtakes moſt are in, but let me beſeech you, come a little more neer, and then ſee and judge what true peace and quiet ſuch have, what ever preſent ſhun-ſhine they may be under from the World. 1. Who are ſo oft at work, how to bridle their conſcience to frame diverſions, and find out ſome falſe grounds of peace, whilſt the truth of God upon any neer approach is ſo viſible a terrour to them, 2. Why do theſe hate a *ſearching miniſtry* ſo much, though the word name none? Is it not becauſe the light torments them, and they cannot ſtand before it? and are ſuch to be envied by any? 3. How is the ſenſe of guilt, and of their former way ſo affrighting upona ſurpriſing ſtrait, or a neer approach to *death*? or would you wiſh to dy with ſuch, on whoſe very countenance may be oft read, (let them conceale never ſo much,) *theſe dreadfull preſages and fear of a judgment to come*? 4. And is not *wickedneſs* a viſible puniſhment to it ſelf, which with ſuch a ſting and fear is haunted, as it may be ſeen, when they ſeek moſt to outdare their conſcience, they find it ſtronger than they, and whilſt no ground of fear or trouble is from without, yet a dreadfull ſound is in their ear, of what is to come? 5. Why are theſe under ſuch dread to be alone, and thus in any meaſure ſerious with their ſoul, to look but over their own caſe, and is this a deſireable peace or quiet? 6. And whence is it that ſo many, who have moſt derided holineſs in their day, are preſſed to enquire and call for ſome *ſerious Miniſter of Chriſt*; yea to deſire ſuch moſt, whom they hated before, when death once is dealing with them?

Qu. VI. *But whilſt the times we are now fallen in are ſo remarkeably ſad and afflicting, what can the righteous do, or would moſt help againſt the imbittering troubles and griefs of a Chriſtian life?*

Answ. Let us conſider 1. How much of the Scripture is peculiarly writ for the *afflicted*, and ſuch as have no

no visible help or comfort. 2. That the very nature of *afflictio* and trouble is so far changed in its being sanctifiedly exercising, as in stead of *poison* to be made *medicinal*. 3. Are not the Christians saddest hours on as swift a course, as their time; and each hour and day putting by some part of its appointed measure? Yea though some *thousands* of crosses should be allotted you, they will come to one at last, 4. A few hours under the pain of a *wounded Spirit*, and the terrours of the wrath of God, would make such to reckon a freedome from this, (though with the sorest of outward affliction) were a sweet calme and deliverance. 5. Is not a sanctified *cross*, without any bounds set to the measure thereof, one of the most expres Scripture *signes* of the *love of God* to his own, the want whereof might indeed be the Christians sorest trial, lest his share be with the World, and such were *Bastards*, not *Sons*? 6. If you can read the most dark and saddest providence with that Commentar of the Scripture thereon, you will then know how the Saints afflictions stand for *blessings*; *Matth.* 5: *ver.* 10, 11. and *diverse temptations* to be a solide ground of joy and comfort, *Jam.* 1: *ver.* 2. 7. Consider but in the saddest *affliction*, how much sadder this might have been: and that they are not thus a *scandal* to the generation of the righteous. 8; What if all our life had been a continued tract of *grief*, *bitterness and trouble*, and but rarely the least of outward comforts dropt in, and so much only given as to keep from sinking? Oh! durst such quarrel, who knew of an eternity of joy in the close? 9. It was a *right way* the Lord led his people in, when he led them through a labyrinth of sore troubles in the *wilderness*, *Psal.* 107: *ver.* 7. and is there shewed as an *embleme* of the journeying state of the Church and each of the Saints here. 10. One sight of that glorious Land which is above, with the first moment of the afflicted Christians entry there, will compense to the furthest a life time of sorrowes and grief. 11. Is it not here the *faith and patience of the Saints* must shine forth, the *trial* whe-

whereof is a more invaluable thing, than all the treaſures of the earth. 12. The ſeaſon of *enduring*, you know, is but ſhort, which for all eternity will never meet the Chriſtian again; and Oh! would you loſe even the leaſt of ſuch an opportunity, not in the trial of your faith and patience only, but of your *love* to Jeſus Chriſt, that *tribulation and diſtreſs was not able to ſeparat betwixt him and you*? *Rom.* 8: *ver.* 39. And your tried love under ſoreſt outward preſſures may be reported in Heaven and recorded there. I ſhall but adde, how ſweet muſt that be to a Chriſtian, when he can ſay, *Let my beloved come and eat of his pleaſant fruits*, *Cant.* 4. *ver.* 16. which to them had moſt pain and wreſtlings in bringing forth.

Qu. VII. *What are theſe pleaſant fruits, which can be found under the croſs, and the many imbittering griefs and troubles of a Chriſtians life?*

Answ. It is ſure, no ſeaſon hath been more remarkeable for *ſowing to the Spirit* and bringing forth much fruit for the Lord, than a time of the *croſs*, and moſt ſearching trials that way; and theſe have been known to ſuch as were ſuteably exerciſed thereby; the gain and pleaſure whereof hath made the remembrance of their ſaddeſt hours ſweet. 1. When *contrition and tenderneſs*, *and ſoft walking* before the Lord hath followed thereon; for ſuch are his delight, in whom he takes greateſt pleaſure, *Eſai.* 58: 15. 2. *Humility*, and the Chriſtians geting his Spirit kept low, is ſuch a fruit, as may make their reckoning ſweet on any other loſs; the way to know how to *abound*, is to know *how to be abaſed*. *Phil.* 4: 12. and this is one of the peculiar ends of afflicting Providences, *to hide pride for men*. *Job.* 33. 17. O bleſſed they who are no leſs concerned to *hide* it from themſelves. 3. Is it not a *pleaſant fruit*, where, by the *croſs* Jeſus Chriſt is more *endeared* to his people, and thus *precious* unto them; their ſoul cleaving to him in deſire and love, even when their ſoul cleaveth to the duſt by a humbling rod? O

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what a rent and tribute is this, which in the Chriſtians ſaddeſt hours only can be payed into their bleſſed Maſter? 4. A through *reſignation* and *ſurrender* to the Lord and his diſpoſal, is a rare and choice improvement of the *Croſs*. Yea it is then found, a Chriſtian to be neereſt his mercy; and his burden moſt ſenſibly grow light; and that this makes a ſpeedy ripening for times of refreſhment from the preſence of the Lord. 5. This great *fruit* is then to be ſought after, by *beleeving in hope, when it is againſt hope*, which is one of the higheſt pieces of ſervice for giving Glory to God, that a Chriſtian here can be called to, and thus for putting to *their ſeale, that God is true.* 6. It is at the loweſt Chriſtians have the moſt remarkeable advantage, by patient enduring for being *more than conquerours through him that hath loved them.* Rom. 8: v. 37. yea that thus the *power of Chriſt reſting upon them*, may have in ſuch a greater triumph, and over a more formidable party, than ever *Alexander* or *Cæſar* could boaſt of in all their conqueſts.

Qu. VIII. *VVhilſt it may be ſtrange, how ſmall a proportion the practice of moſt in theſe times ſeeme to have to their light, and mens uſual converſe with religion more about the uppermoſt boughs, than to ly neer the great and weighty things thereof; what might moſt help to put ſome deeper impreſſion and weight of a Chriſtians work on him, and provoke to ſeriouſneſs, by having ſome greateſt truths moſt frequently kept in ſight?*

Answ. You know, it is not the moſt marvellous things of Religion, nor if one *ſhould riſe from the dead* could deeeply work upon the heart without the *Spirit of God.* But I muſt tell you what was the deſire of a *Judicious Father to a hopleſs ſon, when he was a dying, that he would but once a day take half an hour alone by himſelf, which upon trial and ſome deep reflection*, afterward that young man had, what this

this desire might meane, was blessed to be a mean of his recovery: Oh! If most who are professed Christians were but once this length, that beside some retirement to prayer, they could but for a few moments be *alone once a day* to consider these *truths*, which I shall here instance. 1. What were desireable and comforting in the state of man, if it looked not higher than things seen, or his present abode in the world? 2. How swiftly are the enjoyments of the earth, and delights of the flesh gone and perished in the present use thereof? 3. O what should this be to think seriously on, that the *Gospel is an undoubted reality*, and so far hath the Holy God been mindful of man and magnified him, yea even beyond fallen Angels, that *Jesus Christ should have come down to the world* to make a purchass of such to himself, and save them from the wrath that is to come? 4. That the import of the Gospel is no less than an *eternity of Glory*, even to the meanest of the Saints; and what a blessed strait were this for a Christian; how to divide his wondering betwixt that which is now past, in the great work of *Redemption*, and that which is to come, in the full manifestation of *Glory*. 5. Let us think more frequently on this also, that the poorest now on the earth hath an *immortal soul*, that is of a more excellent nature, and more inestimable value, than these visible Heavens, the Sun, Moon, and Stars; yea such, as no less than the blood of the Son of God revealed in our Nature could ransome from wrath, and yet we put so small a price thereon. 5. That it is sure, so great and solemne a busines as *Death* is before us, and we must know shortly what it means, and to enter into another world. O what will this once be, and should it not now deeply concerne each, that *death come not on all at once*, by more frequent and serious converse therewith? 6. Let us but now bring neer our thoughts what thoughts we shall have of the *world*, when our eyes are shuting upon it, never to enjoy this any more? And what thoughts that marvellous change must cause on

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mens ſpirits, when once entred into endleſs eternity? 7. How marvellous is this, that may cauſe our hearts to faile with wondering on ſome neer converſe therewith, that not only there is ſuch a hope as to be for ever in Heaven, but that our *nature* ſhould be ſo far advanced, even above the *Nature of Angels*, in that unconceiveable *Union with the divine Nature* conjoined for ever, in our bleſſed head and Redeemer. 8. And what ſhould this be to think on, that our *Bodies*, when laid in the duſt, ſhall not only be aſſuredly raiſed, but made like to the glorious Body of Chriſt, *Phil.* 3: 21?